

Selvarajan Yesudian

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A Yoga Miscellany



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Selvarajan Yesudian first came to Europe in 1936 to study medicine and physical education. During his studies in Hungary he came into contact with Mrs. Elisabeth Haich, one of the greatest Western exponents of the philosophy of Yoga, and with her he began to lecture and give courses on Hatha Yoga. Together they wrote *Yoga and Health*, which sold over 100,000 copies in Hungary alone, as well as being translated into English, German, French, Italian, Dutch, Norwegian, Spanish, Hebrew, Japanese and Vietnamese.

Mr. Yesudian has now written a further book *A Yoga Miscellany* in which he tells of his childhood and youth in India, his moving experiences in Hungary during the war, and of the inner guidance to which he and many of his friends trusted. Within this loose framework, practical instruction, meaning-laden legends and sequences of questions are gathered together in rich variety.

Those who know Mr. Yesudian and his previous writings will welcome this addition to their library, which also provides a lively introduction to practical instruction in Yoga.

A Yoga Miscellany
Selvarajan Yesudian
George Allen and Unwin Ltd
State Museum, Lucknow
25s. net
in U.K. only

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42, Jangpura Market,
NEW DELHI.
Phone: 40658

UP State Museum, Lucknow



299.54

A YOGA MISCELLANY



By the same author
with Elisabeth Haich

YOGA AND HEALTH
YOGA UNITING EAST AND WEST

SELVARAJAN YESUDIAN

A YOGA MISCELLANY

*A collection of class lectures
and explanatory texts for students
of Yoga*

ILLUSTRATED



London

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

RUSKIN HOUSE MUSEUM STREET

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1963

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*German Edition
'Selbsterziehung durch Yoga'
(Verlag Eduard Fankhauser)*

© 1961

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
in 12-point Perpetua type
BY UNWIN BROTHERS LTD
WOKING AND LONDON

TO ELISABETH HAICH

in deepest gratitude

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Although parts of this book were originally written in English, it was first published in German under the title *Selbsterziehung durch Yoga* (Verlag Eduard Fankhauser, Thielle, Switzerland). The author is deeply indebted to Mr Stanley Mason for revising the original English texts and translating the rest of the book from the German.



FOREWORD

While thousands in the Western world are now eager to learn something of the way of life embodied in the Eastern teachings of Yoga, there are limits to the circles a teacher can reach by personal instruction and example. Our own Schools of Yoga are in Switzerland, but we believe that many students of Yoga in Britain and elsewhere will be glad to share, if only through the medium of the written word, in the message we there endeavour to communicate. The contents of this book are mainly taken from four journals, originally published in Switzerland but now out of print, to which a few more recent texts and a number of illustrations have been added. Practically all of this material has also been used in class lectures and talks in our Swiss Schools of Yoga.

The signs of decadence in our own times are distressing. The frenzied search for a security that modern man thinks he can find in the transitory world around him breeds confusion in his mind; he grasps at an image conjured up by his own imagination. He has become a dreamer in a realm of illusion. He may be compared with a sleep-walker on the snowy parapets of a skyscraper, whence any moment he may plunge to his death. The material and sensual world on which he has founded his life has been shaken by earthquakes more than once, and more than once a house erected on sinking sands has vanished in the night. What is the meaning of such signs of the times? Where are the happenings of the contemporary world leading us? What is the voice whose warning rings repeatedly from the gathering momentum of events? What is this frightful grip of an invisible hand that does not let us loose, that inflicts pain and grief upon us, forcing our minds to a realization of our plight?

Members of our school attend a weekly Yoga lesson. In these lessons the way to self-reliance, the principles of self-development, are not merely explained; instruction is also given in how to make practical use of them in our daily lives. We learn to walk with heads high. We learn to open our eyes and see life, and to look towards the distant horizon. We learn to stand upright and to face the future without fear. We learn that destiny is nothing

but the outcome of our own acts. We learn to conquer nature and to make her our trusty servant. We learn to see the beauty of life. We learn to break out of the prison of darkness and to take possession of our true heritage of freedom. We learn to see the divinity of the creation. We learn to be human beings conscious of their own worth and of their own divinity.

It is our hope to make Yoga, the ancient science of self-mastery, accessible to all—to old and young, to the learned and the unlearned. We hope to explain it as clearly as possible to the believer, to the man of action, to the philosopher and to him who senses the enormous natural forces inherent in himself and wishes to control them. We hope to make it clear that Yoga is not a form of Eastern wizardry or hypnosis directed towards the development of occult powers; we wish instead to free the name of Yoga of all such false interpretations and to show it in its own true light of purity and power. We wish to proclaim that Yoga is a common possession of all men and by no means the preserve of a single race. Just as a man about to set out on a long journey first equips himself for it, so Yoga equips us for the journey of life, showing each of us the way best suited to his abilities and leading to the highest of all goals, that of perfect happiness and peace.

However far distant from each other we students of Yoga may live, we are still linked by the strong chain of love, connected to each other by spiritual brotherhood. Wherever we are, this love expresses itself in a common endeavour to help instead of to hinder, to build up instead of to destroy, to bring peace and light instead of war and ruin.

The object of this book is to help the individual in his self-development. There is, we believe, no other way of approaching and influencing the masses. That is why we are always grateful to those who are willing to help us in the dissemination of our positive ideas. To create human beings—human beings who are their own masters—is our goal. One man of strength, one individual with a fearless spirit and a knowledge of his own dignity, is of greater value than many tons of theory. What we need are sincere men, women and children, persevering workers, who are ready to shake off the inertia of the past and to be active for the good of others. Yoga teaches over and over again that the only help we can give to the world is to begin by helping our-

selves. Only when we are strong, fearless and independent can we encourage others to be the same. Once his eyes are opened, the individual will take our example and make it the guiding principle of his life. Our aim, then, is self-development, self-mastery, self-reliance. Give an oak the right soil, and it will grow and spread out its branches. Give your fellow-man the inward knowledge of his own strength and wisdom, and he will act like a sage! The name of this silent but purposeful guidance is: Yoga.

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*Alone I came into this world,
Alone to wander all my days.
My wanderings done, yet still alone,
Homeward bound I pace my days
Towards the home that gave me birth.*

OUR WORK IN THE WEST

Circumstances are our greatest friends in need. Not always do they speak with the tongues of angels, but often, like hard slave drivers, they whip us into activity, forcing us to do work from which we shirk. Bent under the burden of conditions imposed upon us, we are at the point of breaking down when suddenly some sixth sense strengthens us and straightens us up. As we stand upright again the imprisoning shackles fall from us and we realize that, far from being weak, we have grown strong. With a world of experience behind us, we emerge revitalized.

When I came to the West, I had not the slightest intention of teaching Yoga. I came to study medicine and physical education and to compare them with the Indian systems, which are the oldest in the world, for my medically trained parents wanted me to continue the family dynasty of physicians. As the Western systems differ entirely from the Indian, I was sometimes requested to expound the ideas and beliefs I shared. In doing so I explained to some extent the teaching of Hatha and Raja Yoga as being the most perfect means of educating the body and mind of man. The Indian science of medicine, *ayurveda*, seeks to treat man as a whole, thus enabling the true causes of illnesses to be diagnosed. Many friends of mine became interested in Yoga and asked me to give lectures and to write on the subject. There was at once an echo of interest after the appearance of a few small articles, but I was shy of this public attention and returned to my studies. Destiny, however, intended otherwise. However much I hesitated, nothing could stop the avalanche of interest from all strata of society. The book *Sport and Yoga* was published with the kind help of numerous friends. By a trick of fate I was now brought into contact with one of the greatest Western exponents of the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and the philosophy of Yoga, a person who was equally well versed in the Western philosophies and was an authority on the Bible. This esteemed teacher was Mrs Elisabeth Haich. Together we opened our first Yoga School in her large art studio.

Exceedingly critical in their views, the Hungarians are not easily influenced either by Oriental or Occidental ideas. They use their own judgement and have a deep-seated love of freedom. The misconception that Yoga was some strange religious ritual of the Hindus for the acquisition of mysterious powers was already widespread, and I was often asked whether it was not a religion. Some confused Yoga with the contortionist 'stunts' of fakirs, who choose to remain in some unnatural posture as a self-imposed penance. Others thought Yoga meant lying on a bed of nails, or allowing a snake to inflict a deadly wound and then curing oneself of the bite by the incantation of magic syllables. Some asked whether I could swallow broken glass, as wandering beggars sometimes do to earn their daily bread. Others thought that Yoga taught the famous rope trick. Just as the figure of Buddha is sometimes seen displayed in a night-club or bar in the West, placed there through the ignorance of the owner to evoke an Eastern atmosphere, so Yoga is often brought down to the level of a circus attraction or interpreted by ignorant writers as some magic or religious hocus-pocus. When I first shrank from the task of writing or lecturing on the subject, it was because I knew this spirit of ignorance and confusion was prevalent. I could not then see that here was precisely the opportunity for me to throw some light on the subject, until Mrs Haich and the repeated enquiries of those who were interested made my path clear to me. Subsequently we wrote together on the subject and lectured throughout the length and breadth of the land on what Yoga really is.

For the sport-loving world the word 'sport' has a strong attraction, and since our book was an approach through Yoga to sport and physical culture, we entitled it *Sport and Yoga*. (The English edition later appeared under the title of *Yoga and Health*.) Within three months the first impression of five thousand copies was sold out, and in less than eighteen months the book had reached its ninth impression. I now clearly saw the hand of destiny guiding our work. False conceptions of Yoga were soon swept away and the people began to be convinced that this science really helps man to be a healthy and valuable member of society. They learnt that 'Yoga makes a man a better man, a Hindu a better Hindu, and a Christian a better Christian'. The Hungarian newspapers were enthusiastic in

their acclamation of Yoga for many months, for they recognized its regenerating value for the nation. The simple and correct form of breathing as taught in the book, as well as some physical exercises or *asanas*, were introduced into hundreds of schools all over Hungary. The army and the air force practised Yoga. Hospitals experimented with the complete Yoga breathing system and found it to be an excellent cure and prophylactic for high blood pressure, nervous tension, insomnia and various neurotic and internal disorders. Blood tests proved that after three to five minutes' proper breathing the fatigued blood was freed of its injurious toxins and was charged with oxygen. The therapeutic value of the Yoga exercises gradually received more and more attention and recognition, for experiments in various hospitals proved the efficacy of certain *asanas* in aiding the elimination of kidney stones and in stimulating the pancreas gland in its function of secreting the pancreatic juice which it pours with the bile into the digestive tract. Though I kept myself aloof from the actual treatment of patients, whom I sent to our other physicians, I occasionally had visits from doctors with their patients and was asked to diagnose the cause of their ailments. Many cases were chronic, the cause often being rooted in the psyche. When the patient was willing to master his thoughts and feelings by self-discipline, the illness or symptom took a different turn and healing set in. Dr Alexander Margitai made a test with a sphygmomanometer on one of his patients suffering from hypertonia. After five minutes of slowed abdominal breathing, the blood pressure dropped from 198 to 160 mm. It remained constant at this level after a couple of months of regular breathing practice. In surgical cases, too, it was noticed that obstinate wounds healed more quickly if more oxygen was introduced into the blood-stream by systematic breathing.

We were very gratified to see how popular Yoga had become in a matter of two years. Its popularity did not, however, prejudice its seriousness. On the contrary, *Sport and Yoga* dealt exclusively with the physical aspects of Yoga, and thus opened a path for it into the heart and home of the Hungarian nation. The incessant stream of letters that poured in daily demanded more literature on the subject of mental and spiritual development. Taking our cue, Mrs Haich and I set to work on

our second book: *Yoga Uniting East and West*. The physical and spiritual evolution of man was discussed at length in the pages of this new volume. We were now very pleased to see that a keen interest was being taken in Yoga by the Church. This brought us into contact with broad-minded priests and clergymen who themselves practised both the physical and the mental training proposed by Yoga. Deriving much benefit from it, they recommended to their novices certain exercises for the development of physical resistance and mental concentration.

The aristocratic circles of Budapest also attended the group classes, as no private lessons were given. Each one laid aside his cloak of convention and was prepared to forget the importance of his person for at least one hour. In a class in which many students participated, nobody knew who his neighbour was. Silence was observed in order to still the restless mind; none cared to talk. In each class discipline established itself quite naturally, and the spirit of unity became the common possession of all. Despite the various strata of society that were represented, despite the faith each confessed, despite the race from which each sprang, all distinctions disappeared the moment we took our seats on our mats. In these gatherings poor students and University professors mingled; a simple workman would sit next to a prince, or a Jewish businessman beside an unrecognized Catholic priest. We assembled as a community with a single purpose, to reach one and the same goal.

At the close of a public lecture in the Music Academy of Budapest, numbers of people wanted to have a word with me personally. Among them I noticed the figure of a small boy waiting. Touched to see so young a face, I approached him and asked what he wanted. 'I am fourteen years old, Mr Yesudian, and I can't grow. Can you help me?' he practically pleaded. 'Come tomorrow to the five o'clock group and we shall see how we can help you.' With that we parted. Josef Kiraly came, his face lit up with hope and joy. He had read the book four times and knew the names of all the exercises by heart. He practised diligently and surprised us all, for in three months he had already grown an inch. His stunted form of little more than 3 feet rapidly changed, and in two years he was 5 feet 3 inches. Kiraly was extremely poor and came a long distance on foot three times a week for the Hatha Yoga classes, for the

lectures on self-knowledge and for meditation. His clothes were neat despite his poverty, even though the shirt beneath his clean coat was torn and sleeveless. With a very shy face he approached me one day after three months and emptied his right-hand pocket on my table. It contained coppers he had been saving all these months. 'If you don't mind, Mr Yesudian, this is all I can give you just now. Would you permit me to continue?' he asked. I assured him that he could come without paying anything, and gave him his money back. The boy's face grew grave and very disappointed. He had been saving to contribute his all with a joyful heart, and my rejection pained him. 'All right, Josef, I shall take this money, which is very precious to us as it is to you.' And with a smile we shook hands.

Most of our school members were men and women who wanted to devote more attention to their health. It might have been expected that women would be in the majority, but the contrary was the case. The serious interest of the Hungarian public was apparent from the constant influx of male members, many of whom remained for years. There was an unending stream of boys, most of them being poor students from schools and universities. There were also dozens of medical students who were keenly studying the therapeutic value of Yoga and its application to both mental and physical ailments. Owing to the lack of space for these newcomers, we formed classes which ran far into the night.

War was now imminent, and Hungary was soon to be involved. Panic and the psychosis of war were spreading all over the land. Compulsory recruitment was introduced for the defence of the frontiers. The Germans soon marched into Hungary, however, and Hungarian troops were compelled to fight on the Russian front with the Germans. A cry of despair went up throughout the land, for this meant a useless struggle and a waste of national man-power. Most of our male members had to leave us. Jewish persecution was raging day and night. All the houses around had to be evacuated at only twenty-four hours' notice, and they were soon occupied by German troops. A large block opposite our school in the Haich villa became the Gestapo headquarters. I cannot understand to this day why the Germans spared our house, which was in an open position and well situated. As though some unseen hand protected us, we were sheltered

throughout the war and nobody touched us. Some of the police officers who attended our classes warned me not to move about in the streets lest I should be seized by the Germans as a British subject. I obeyed and held my classes after sunset. There were several Jews who came in secret, but they all had to wear the big yellow star which the Nazis forced them to display in order to distinguish them from Aryans. Our hearts bled to see this humiliation. Even the Jewish children were stamped with the same sign. However, when these people realized the symbolic meaning of the star of David and its tremendous influence on the individual who wore it, how it represented the unification of the forces working within man and how it radiated peace and strength, a new fortitude possessed them and they went about the town fearlessly from then on, convinced that the great Jehovah's guiding hand was over them. They believed that, just as it had guided and governed their fathers and forefathers, so the hand of the God of their race was now above them and would protect them. An unflinching, almost fanatical faith took hold of them. We were surprised to hear from many of them the exact quotation of texts they had learnt from the weekly school leaflets we distributed. I have never seen the expression of fear so strongly outlined on a person's face as on the features of some of these terrified men and women who came to our classes. They knew that death might descend upon them at any moment. Prepared on the one hand to meet it, and yet convinced on the other that the God of their fathers would save them, they came and went. Yet after the meditation evenings, when Mrs Haich's words instilled into them divine courage, their faces were lit up with love and forgiveness towards their enemies, and they went home no longer daunted by life or death. For to them the endeavour to realize God was a greater urge than all else in these last hours of ultimatum. I could at times catch the muted voice of an elderly Jewish lady as she repeated the words of the warrior monk Vivekananda: 'If there is one word that you feel coming like a bomb from the Upanishads, that bursts like a grenade upon the mass of ignorance, it is the word *fearlessness*. The religion of fearlessness is the religion that ought to be taught. It is true that in this world and in the world of religion fear is the real cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery; fear that brings death; fear that brings

evil . . . Let your nerves be strong! What we need are muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping; but let us stand upright and be men!' This lady would pass round such thoughts to others on slips of paper.

For many months before their execution these people learnt that no thought is lost, for each is transmitted as energy to the atmosphere. Just as the air enters every room and every crevice, so too our good, positive and strong thoughts enter the atmosphere around us and form a barrier to defend us from all evil and harm. They learnt also that if a few thousand people would sit down and concentrate on peace, the power of their conscious effort of will would fling back every assault, every invasion. They read written in bold letters on our school blackboard: 'Men, men are wanted; everything else will come, but strong, vigorous, young, believing men are needed. A hundred such and the world will be revolutionized.'

One day a middle-aged lady approached me and said: 'Mr Yesudian, you don't realize the danger you are creating by permitting so many Jews to attend your classes. You are risking your life, and the lives of those who come here. A trouble-maker could at any moment report you to the Gestapo across the road and it would end in bloodshed. In any case, don't you see how much antagonism there is in these present times towards the Jews? I can assure you that many of our Christian members share the same feelings.' Stung to the heart at the brutal frankness of her words and at the same time sad to think that this lady had not derived much benefit from the doctrines of Yoga, which teach love and understanding, I remained silent for a moment. 'Mrs Royko,' I said at last, 'ever since this school was founded our doors have been open to men and women of all sects, creeds and races. It pains me to see your antipathy towards the Jews. I shall on no account dismiss them just because some Christian members find it uncomfortable to share the same room! Moreover, I am surprised to hear your remarks, for I thought you had assimilated the teachings of tolerance. Look how these poor people come to us seeking the only consolation they have, which is God. Could we ever send them away? No, Mrs Royko! If you find their company disturbing to your peace of mind, may I kindly beg you to refrain from coming for the time being until these troubles subside.'

Two big tears rolled down her face as she looked deep into my eyes. Her expression had suddenly changed to one of sympathy and love, and trembling with emotion in every limb she unbuttoned the collar of her raincoat and revealed the huge yellow star sewn on her blouse.

When the Russians had taken Budapest after a siege of two months and the shortage of food had become acute, for a fortnight or more Mrs Royko daily brought us a bowl of soup she had collected by begging. Under the heavy shelling our house collapsed and we were all but buried alive in the cellar. Twenty-six of us were now forced to find shelter elsewhere. At the risk of her own life, Mrs Royko searched for us for days till she found us all crammed into two rooms.

The war drew to its end. The city was in a state of siege. Buda and Pest are divided by the River Danube. All communication between them ceased for some weeks after the Germans had blown up the four bridges as they retreated before the Russians. In spite of endless difficulties, three of our women members living in Pest walked about eight miles to bring us a precious parcel of food which helped us to subsist for a few more days. It was moving to see the wonderful solidarity and family spirit of so many of our school members.

When the siege of Budapest was over and the city was occupied by the Russians, we moved across into Pest, where we temporarily set up our school. One day our house caretaker rushed breathlessly into our room and excitedly related his story: 'I was standing in front of a shop-window when I noticed a Russian officer searching for some literature. He spoke no Hungarian, but he gave me to understand by signs that he was looking for something on Yoga. There were no books on the subject in the shop, but I told him that I knew a Hindu yogi who lived in the same house as I. He wouldn't believe this, and his officer friend burst out laughing, scorning the idea that a Hindu should be living here and saying that it was the best joke of the day. I told him that I would bring the Indian to his house tonight, and with that we parted. Mr Yesudian,' he continued, 'you need have no fear, please come with me. He lives about a mile away from here. And you too, madam, please come with us,' he pleaded, by now completely out of breath. The political situation was far from safe at the time. Suspects were being shot

out of hand. My dark complexion might easily cause mistrust. 'Madam,' he pleaded, 'I'm in charge of a block of ten houses and can't risk being taken prisoner by the Russians who have given me this position of responsibility themselves. I assure you that we shall all three of us be back safely tonight. Please don't let me down.' Mrs Haich agreed to go, and that night, at nine, we were standing before the Russian captain's door. His friend was flabbergasted to see us, and the captain himself pleased beyond words. Russian fashion, he embraced me heartily and greeted Mrs Haich with the greatest respect. The two Russians had made a bet about my coming, and the captain had won it. In broken German he spoke of his enthusiasm for Yoga. Mrs Haich interpreted his comments and questions, and soon he was being enlightened on the subject. After an interesting hour we parted. At our invitation the captain came to our house the next morning. Just as he rang our bell upstairs, we heard loud shrieks and complaints below, accompanied by wild yells and shooting. Looking through the window, I saw some fifteen soldiers entering the courtyard below and violently evicting the tenants of the house. The captain and his comrade rushed down and threw the whole band of raiders out. 'This is my teacher's house, and I am here,' he yelled at the top of his voice. 'I won't stand any nonsense, so get out all of you, before there's trouble.' The tenants living below us were most grateful for his help, and needless to say we were heartily glad of his intervention ourselves. How mysterious, I thought, are the ways of destiny! Had we not met this officer, we should certainly have had to evacuate the house that morning; and finding a flat was no easy matter in those days.

The captain came daily with his friends to practise Yoga. He had a Hungarian copy of *Sport and Yoga* translated into Russian within a few days and sent it off to Russia. Soon afterwards he reported that several generals and high army officers were practising in accordance with his instructions and the contents of the book. He tried to insist on our going to Moscow to introduce Yoga to the people there. Everything would be at our disposal, he said, although we should not be allowed to leave Russia for some years. For many reasons, however, we declined his invitation.

After the rebuilding of the Yoga School and part of the family

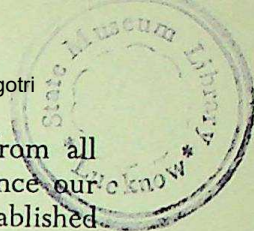
house, we moved back to our old premises. The earlier interest in Yoga did not abate. On the contrary, it continued to grow, and to such a degree that the new government became interested in our activities. Many members of the Communist regime attended our classes and found that Yoga did not conflict with their ideas and ideals.

Later on our public lectures drew larger crowds than ever. Political circles now became suspicious, however, and refused to allow the ideas and truths of Yoga to be publicly proclaimed. Although I protested that the movement was free from all political motives, my efforts were of no avail, and our school was closed. Instead of resisting this move, we decided to withdraw and to let the seed we had sown grow of its own accord in the hearts of the thousands who had come to us. In sorrow Mrs Haich and I parted from all our dear friends and from the great family we had built up and prepared to turn our steps towards California. After a short stay at the Vedanta Centre, we planned to go to India and work for the regeneration of the race.

Mrs Haich had often talked to me of the Jungfrau, a Swiss mountain of great beauty with the highest mountain railway in Europe, which ran up to an altitude of over 11,000 feet above sea level. When, therefore, she proposed going to Switzerland for a week's holiday, I was delighted with the idea.

Upon arrival we were put up at the house of Patak Gabor in Baden near Zurich. He had been an active member of our school in Budapest for many years, and it was a great pleasure to see him again. One day we received a telephone call from a small society in Zurich who wanted to meet us and to hear something about Yoga. Arriving at the Zurich main station, we were met by Mrs Hanna Hermann and two gentlemen, who presented us with a big bouquet of yellow dahlias. Little did we realize then that this meeting was to initiate an important phase of our work in Europe. We were asked to stay for a week and give the group instruction in Hatha-Yoga. That week began in November 1948 and has gone on to the present.

These circumstances, together with the help of valued friends, have enabled us to set up Yoga Schools in most of the big towns of Switzerland. Our headquarters at Zurich and the Summer School in Ponte Tresa, Ticino, have afforded us the



wonderful opportunity of welcoming foreign guests from all parts of the world. We are gratified to know that, since our work was begun in Switzerland in 1948, the schools established in all parts of the land have given students from many countries the opportunity to take Yoga lessons. From Switzerland's immediate neighbours, Germany, Austria, France and Italy, hundreds of guests arrive annually for a course of a few weeks' advanced instruction. We have Yoga Schools in Zurich, Berne, St. Gallen, Lucerne, Basle, Olten, Lausanne and Geneva. The book *Sport and Yoga* has been published in English (under the title of *Yoga and Health*), French, German, Italian, Hungarian, Dutch, Spanish, Norwegian, Hebrew, Japanese and Vietnamese. This has been possible largely because of the geographically unique position of Switzerland. The literature we have published is making its own way around the world, and we sincerely hope that it will be a link in that invisible chain of love which brings human hearts nearer and makes them more capable of feeling for the sufferings of their fellows.

Switzerland is the heart of Europe. From this vital centre, which has for so many years remained free and neutral, a stream of ideas and thoughts is being sent out into the limbs of Europe and beyond her shores to America. A nation that dissipates its strength in war cannot easily bring good to humanity. Working silently behind the scenes, Switzerland has been able to bestow upon the world her quota of peace and purity. This nation, which has long done away with the death penalty and has not meddled with the violence of war for over a century, is ripe to stand and teach us to do likewise.

May the blessing of God be on our humble work. May Switzerland add her goodwill to our endeavours. And may all blessings be on those who aspire to be conscious individuals and members of the human community. May we ever bear in mind the sacred truth that we are children of one and the same Father in Heaven. May He guide us and inspire us in our daily actions. And above all may we never forget our true nature, the manifestation of which is the only thing in life which really matters—the manifestation of the divinity which is in our hearts.

RETROSPECT

When Yoga was first introduced to the people of Hungary through the medium of the literature we published, the tremendous response overwhelmed us and we found it hardly possible to cope with the multitude of wishes and enquiries. Our Yoga School in Budapest, which I founded and directed with Mrs Elisabeth Haich, made it possible for hundreds to attend classes where self-development was taught. Irrespective of caste, colour or creed, in this school rich and poor, student and teacher, learned and unlearned, all found a place where they could benefit according to their needs. At each of the public lectures we held on the practical application of the science of self-knowledge and self-control, the urgent need for more literature on Yoga and more personal instruction became increasingly apparent. Mrs Haich and I did our best to satisfy the demand, and with joyful hearts we turned our week-ends into working days and made excursions to the Ashram district outside Budapest or to the beautiful oakwoods of the Haich family in Leanyfalu. On such occasions we would listen to Mrs Haich expounding the Vedas, the Upanishads or the Bhagavad Gita, or the four paths of Karma, Bhakti, Raja and Jnana Yoga, or would sit listening to the wonderful promises of the Bible. At the close we would sit in a large circle to practise the Yoga *asanas* and to meditate together. Those were never-to-be-forgotten days which made one big family of us and bound us for ever with the bonds of truth and spiritual freedom. About the same time the book *Sport and Yoga* was making its way into the hearts of the people, and we were glad to learn from the publishers that within three years 100,000 copies had been sold. The flood of letters from all parts of the country was a constant joy to us, and the innumerable questions that were put to us concerning physical and mental development soon convinced us that direct contacts would permit a common denominator to be found for many different points of view and would enable complete unity to be attained in the Budapest school, in its teachings and in those who followed them.

It was soul-stirring, during the war, to witness the courageous attitude of many individuals who had been weak before. Dr H. would relate how he came through the torture chamber with his mind immersed in Yoga, knowing that death cannot touch him who is free from blemish; how he developed almost super-human powers of resistance as he stood naked, knee-deep in cold water in his winter imprisonment. He produced bodily heat to protect himself against the cold, while his mind was calm in God. Despite the many other tortures inflicted upon him he refused to betray his country. Another student was thrown into prison for political reasons and on false charges. It was winter-time, and he slept on the bare ground in a sitting position. His right hand was chained to his left foot and his left hand to his right foot. None of these punishments, however, could break his calm and joyful spirit. His wonderful example and his illuminating talks on Yoga gave strength to his fellow-prisoners. Many thieves and other offenders were persuaded to give up their way of life by the power he had of appealing to their better natures.

One day after the war, there was a knock on our door and Mrs Haich admitted a well-dressed general. General N., who had practised Yoga for several years, came to tell us some of his prison experiences. He had lost his influential position in the army after being unjustly denounced, and with many others he had awaited his execution daily. 'Now I must go,' he thought, 'and if that is God's will, let me lose no time, but direct all my powers towards the realization of my divine self.' Every three or four hours a deputy marched into his cell to tell him that he was about to be shot. Resigned to his fate, he turned his attention inwards, intent on reaching his goal before he died. When at last a few men marched into his cell to fetch him away, they found the general in a state of beatitude, his eyes fixed on some sight invisible to other eyes. They spoke to him, but there was no reply, for his senses were withdrawn and his mind completely immersed in a higher realm of reality. Struck with fear and awe, none of these rough men dared touch the general, for each of them felt the pure and untainted radiation of a spiritual power. He was released soon afterwards.

Hundreds of similar incidents, though unforgotten, cannot be recorded here. They all confirm the indomitable influence of

the powers in man which, when consciously and rightly controlled, can have a potent effect on all the actions of his daily life.

Just when our plans in Hungary seemed to be coming to fruition, fate intervened and left us little choice but to leave the country, for the political climate after the Second World War took little account of spiritual things. We departed with the consolation that the ideas instilled into the hearts of so many would now be able to mature and to manifest themselves in action as theory was put into practice.

The aim of our Yoga School is to train people to manifest their true nature, and to show that all suffering is caused by our acting contrary to our inner convictions and will. We must, however, be quite clear in our minds that the most important part of our training is the strength derived from mastering ourselves and from triumphing over bitter experience. The courageous spirit of a Napoleon awakens bravery in a youth. The tenacity of a Cromwell inspires similar fortitude, and in the same way the lives of all the great that we have read or heard about can serve as shining examples to us. However, the inspiration obtained from such models does not suffice unless it is backed by our own actions. The means of acquiring the desired attributes are taught in our school, and the student learns to apply himself diligently to the task of becoming a man of action and self-reliance. But where are the peaks we should like to scale in life, and what do we want to conquer or to attain? However lofty, these dizzy heights no longer lie beyond us but within our reach. What a joyful victory when difficulties are first overcome and our will-power takes control! What satisfaction and honour when we succeed in scaling the mountain of anger! What rejoicing when pride is defeated by gentleness and ignorance by wisdom! Yoga teaches the practical steps any child or adult can take towards self-mastery. The student learns to hold the reins of his warring senses. He learns to guide the heavenly steeds that draw the chariot of his body through the surging waters of life. Finally he learns that the body, with its innumerable latent powers, is only his servant, and that he and he alone is master of his life, for he is spirit, eternal, blessed and free. The essence of our instruction is therefore to indicate soberly and clearly the practical means of acquiring will-power, resistance, concentration, self-control, the retentive

faculty of memory, powers of discrimination, courage, mental and physical balance, perseverance, calmness and peace of mind. It is our aim to help the seeker to increase his angle of vision and so to gain a wide horizon comprehending all aspects of life; to teach him that it is the plain that gives the mountain its majesty and the mountain that gives beauty to the plain. This all-embracing attitude will enable him to see each creed as a bulwark around a growing soul, a necessity up to the stage of spiritual adolescence, but leading to spiritual maturity, in which each one must cast off all the shackles that once bound him. Yoga is an accelerated means of evolution, a conscious and positive action directed towards the manifestation of the highest in man. Yoga teaches the language of life and helps us to make it comprehensible both to the child and the adult.

With this work we also wish to clear away the many misconceptions which still prevail with regard to Yoga and to emphasize its practical value. We wish to show that it has nothing in common with mystery-mongering or with supernatural practices. We want to make it clear that Yoga is an ancient science of self-development, the principles of which are, despite their antiquity, fully applicable to our daily lives.

In the desire to help wherever we can, we send forth this book with a prayer for the blessing of God who directs our daily steps and actions. May it bring light where there is darkness and hope where there is despondency, may it change weakness to strength and, where there is unrest, bestow peace.

OUR INDIVIDUAL AND NATIONAL DUTY

Class Talks, School of Yoga, Zurich

A nation is a body of people possessing similar qualities and characteristics and subject to a common evolution. It is never by chance that we are born as representatives of a particular race or people. Our tendencies, impulses, energies, desires, motives, propensities and plans are manifested more easily within the framework of a nation consisting of people born with purposes and inclinations similar to our own.

Let us take Switzerland as an example. It is peopled by men and women with characters and qualities resembling each other, who are assembled to work together in peace and in freedom. The Swiss love peace and won their freedom long ago. The experience of war and fighting is a closed chapter of their history, and for many years they have not engaged in any war. 'Switzerland is a peace-loving country,' I remarked to a taxi-driver in Zurich one day. Without a moment's hesitation he exclaimed emphatically: 'Yes, we Swiss hate war.' Through this remark I caught a glimpse of the nation's standpoint. One can hate only what one has experienced to one's cost. The wages of hatred and war are suffering and destruction. The natural spirit of competition should be able to express itself in peaceful rivalry, without fighting and bloodshed.

Every traveller who sets foot in a foreign country soon gains an impression of the character of its people. The first impression of the visitor to Switzerland is one of unusual cleanliness and order, of accuracy and precision in all aspects of life. These things, however, are only the outer manifestation of an inner state. I do not want to go into details here, but having travelled widely, I am in the habit of registering facts and impressions from the various countries and comparing notes. Switzerland is unique in many respects. Thus four small peoples speaking German, French, Italian and Romansh are here united in one. By the will of Providence they have been joined to prove that

peace and freedom can reign even where circumstances are so varied, and that it is possible to live together without any spirit of antagonism not only for one's own good but for the good of the nation and of humanity in general.

Each nation on earth has a special task to fulfil and a special role to play. Greece gave her art, which is still the inspiration of Europe. The Romans left their law. Egypt bequeathed her religion. Our Old Testament is a continuation of the old Egyptian faith through the teachings of the great Moses, who received his initiation in ancient Egypt.

Today too each nation contributes its part to the progress of the whole. The achievement of freedom and peace is Switzerland's strength, and it is on her neutral ground that the world meets to discuss many of its vital problems. May it continue to do so, and may peace and freedom at last be established for all time!

True progress, however, can result only if we are objective enough to see the hindrances and obstacles that lie in our path and if we have the will-power to remove them. Each country's heritage has been built up by the generations of the past and completed by the endeavours of the present, but it must be upheld and consolidated by the next generation. And this next generation is constituted by our own children. Have these children been rightly prepared for the great work? Are they strong in their faith in themselves? Have they the powers of resistance of their ancestors? And here we must confess that, all over the world, there are unmistakable signs of weakness in the younger generation. Before they have reached the age of maturity they already take to the harmful habits of smoking and drinking. These habits cleave to them in later years and open the door to all sorts of failings. The effect is not merely individual; it is a national calamity. An undermined health is a greater foe than any political opponent.

But why does our youth nowadays take to smoking and drinking? What does this disastrous habit replace? What inner deficiency drives them to this cheap anodyne? What is it the child needs but is not receiving?

Let us think back to our own childhood. What do we remember about our parents? What has left its indelible mark on our memories from those early days? Is it the food, the clothing, a

comfortable home, money or material gifts that we received? Is it any worldly boon that we are grateful for? No, for it is quite natural to receive such things. Instead, it is the personality of our parents, their good or bad example, that we recollect. We think of a mother, perhaps, who was kindness, forbearance and love itself. We think of a father who with a firm hand led us to the gateways of maturity, where we could take the responsibility on our own shoulders. The child is a sensitive receptacle for all impressions, which it ponders and absorbs. If the impressions are injurious, there is no end to the painful consequences they entail. The problems of grown-ups are private affairs and should not be discussed before children, however precocious their understanding. The family arguments, be they slight or serious, often take a turn for the worse and destroy the child's respect for its parents, who should be its ideal and the personification of everything it holds dear. How many parents fulfil this sacred duty? What father is a real shepherd of his little flock? What mother embodies the dignity of the life-giver and commands the respect due to her? What father personifies the virtues of truthfulness, courage, strength and faith? What mother is a shrine for the heart of her child and the object of his emulation and worship? What teacher embodies the discipline of true morality and sets an example of courage, self-respect and the other virtues? And what priest breathes peace and benediction by his very presence into the ever-receptive soul of the child? If we have not offered some at least of these spiritual gifts to our children, we have not fulfilled our part as parents and preceptors. If we have inflicted wounds on the growing soul, we cannot profess surprise at the misery and weakness we have ourselves caused. We must be quite clear in our own minds that the responsibility is ours.

Instead of bathing the roots of our children's hearts in the waters of life, we sometimes leave them to survive in a wilderness of doubt and despair. When education instils no noble impulses and fails to awaken spirituality, the inward vacuum and distress will cause crooked growth and will result in compensation being sought in harmful pleasures.

In ancient times a Maharaja who had the welfare of his subjects at heart asked his ministers how the people were faring. 'Are they happy? Are they satisfied?' he enquired.

'O Maharaj,' answered the minister, 'may the Almighty bless you, for your subjects enjoy justice and peace. They are happy and content. They sing, they dance, and they make merry. They drink, they disport themselves, and their pleasures are without number.' The king thereupon became very grave and said sadly: 'My subjects are unhappy. They seek pleasure to forget some sorrow. I must find out what it is they lack.' That very night, disguised as a wandering beggar, he went out amongst his own people, to share in their sorrows and to find some remedy for them. A few days later the king returned, summoned his court and his sages and gave his orders: 'My people are in great spiritual darkness. Receiving no light, they tread the path of pleasure and distraction. I need strong men to help them out of their weakness, I need learned men to lead them out of their darkness. I need shining examples to help me build my nation. Go forth! Travel the length and breadth of the land and bring my people light. Give them back their highest possession, give them knowledge and wisdom. Give them their spiritual heritage of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, and soon the ideal of a strong and virtuous life will change their weak-willed ways.'

What does man treasure most in life? What means more to him than the ephemeral pleasures of this world? Surely the unfolding of his true spiritual nature. Everything that hinders him in this inward progress makes him miserable. Whom does the world esteem more, the man of the flesh or the man of the spirit? Undoubtedly him whose spirit is alert and awake. Man is a spiritual being, and as such nothing short of spirituality can content him. Everything that broadens his perspectives towards the goal of universal being is spirituality. Are we receiving what is most essential for us? Is our life being cast in the right mould? Is it fit to be taken as a model? Is the child's mind receiving the proper impressions to enable it to expand and to act rightly? Is it being strengthened so that it can in due course gain understanding and go from strength to strength? Or is it acting under the stress of fear and uncertainty?

I have frequently walked through the streets of wonderful cities in Europe. Often my glance has rested on church steeples towering above their surroundings. Many times I would have liked to enter these sanctuaries to seek some quiet, some moments

of peaceful communion. But the heavy doors were bolted. My heart sank in disappointment and I could not understand why the church, which belongs to the whole community, should be locked. Every Christian is admitted to the house of God, but for some reason this is a privilege reserved for Sundays. As I sat on the church steps and pondered over these things, many reasons for the tragic state of affairs in Europe became clear to me.

Consider for a moment: religion has become a Sunday affair, something exclusive, something non-essential. The realization of this should fill our hearts with dismay. The first necessity of man is not being freely given to him. He is being deprived of his birthright. His spiritual heritage has been taken away from him and has become a myth for the next world. The heart is no longer in its place. The bridge between head and heart is broken. In this bewildering state, confusion seizes man and he acts unwisely.

What else can awaken the tender inward impulses of man if not an education which reminds him of his better nature, which appeals to his noble soul and all his virtuous qualities? Can these sublime feelings be stirred by a short drilling of the soul on Sundays, by a few minutes of muttered prayers, a few minutes of sentimental singing, a few minutes of being told our errors and failings and of being reproached for our ignorance? Is this the spirituality of man? Is this the education to help us overcome our egotism, to teach us to respect everything that is our neighbour's?

These are not things to be taken lightly. Let us seek some remedy, let us make a personal effort to turn the helm of society in the right direction. Things as they are can come to no good. The man of today is dissatisfied, for the vital problem of his spiritual progress is unsolved. The child of today, the citizen of tomorrow, is growing up in a world devoid of the very essentials. Today's civilization overwhelms man with a sea of material comforts and possessions, and, thrown out of balance, he becomes incapable of physical and spiritual self-control. What we need today are brave souls who are able to work not only for their own good but ultimately for the good of others. Who have been the torch-bearers of mankind? Sincere souls who never condemned others for the state of affairs but first

set about ordering their own lives, improving them, refining them, and through their own attainments inspiring others and helping them to advance. 'The history of the world is the history of men and women who have had faith in themselves.' It was never the masses that made history. Take the great teacher Pestalozzi. He stood alone. He had unwavering faith in himself and in his ideals. He was the embodied voice of the millions of children appealing for more love, more justice, more care, more true education. His words shook a nation to its very roots, and it responded. A second Pestalozzi was never needed. One takes the lead; the others only have to follow.

The streets are lighted by large lamps spaced thirty, even fifty yards from each other. And yet they are not too far apart. In the same way a human being who is strong, fearless and upright casts his rays on the darkness of society and turns it all to light. His example awakens the spiritual qualities of the illiterate and the learned, but most of all of the children and the youth.

It is not our task to bring about national reforms. That we can leave to others. In our Yoga classes we learn that our aim is the making of true human beings. Our object is self-development, and our guiding thought is a positive and constructive attitude to life. It is our ambition to better mankind by bettering the individual. The irresistible influence of our own self-development will be felt in our surroundings and by our children. This fact alone is qualified to fill our hearts with joy and satisfaction. We need men and women who have faith in themselves and in life. If we have faith, we have all. It is immaterial whether we have a strong or a weak constitution, a good situation or none at all. These things will come in the fullness of time. All that is needed is strong, simple faith. For faith is the light that illumines our path. First we must cast this light on our path, then we can step forwards. First we must awaken faith, then all else will follow. We must work with unflinching faith in ourselves, we must change our outlook from weakness to strength, from fear to fearlessness, from cowardice to courage. An individual so changed becomes a dauntless worker for his community, for his nation and for the world at large. Let us give of our best! One gram of conscious, positive action means tons of good for the masses. No good is ever lost. Your country lives through you. Fall, and your country falls with you. Rise,

and your country rises. A nation soon declines if it does not produce the right type of men for the tasks that face it. Produce strong men, vigorous and sincere to the bone! Produce men of valour! Produce men of faith! For such are the salt of the earth and the foundation of the great national edifice that is to provide shelter, protection and inspiration for the generations to come.

THOUGHTS ON SELF-DEVELOPMENT

There was once a shepherd who led his flock daily to green and luxuriant pastures. He played on his pipes, and in the afternoon he rested and slept for a while in the shade of a tree. One day a hungry lioness from the nearby jungle descended upon the flock, and the sheep scattered in terror in all directions. The lioness was with young, and in making a great leap she overtaxed her strength and fell dead. At the same moment the young lion cub was born. The shepherd took this lion cub and reared it with his sheep. It grew up and lived as the sheep lived. It grazed on the pastures and learned to bleat like a sheep. It grew in size day by day, until at last it was a powerful lion. But even then it continued to bleat and to eat grass. One hot summer's day a proud, wild lion once more came out of the nearby jungle, attacked the flock and stilled its hunger. The sheep scattered in headlong flight, the bleating lion among them. The lion from the jungle discovered this fleeing and bleating lion and was struck with amazement. Seizing him, it asked: 'Brother, why do you bleat? What has happened to your noble voice?' But the sheep-lion implored him in terror: 'Oh, I am only a poor little sheep, please do me no harm.' 'You are not a sheep, you are a mighty lion,' said the lion from the jungle. But the sheep-lion, trembling with fear and bleating piteously, again whimpered that he did not want to die, he was much too young and small to be eaten up. The king of the jungle then caught the stupid lion, led him to a deep well and said: 'Look at your reflection in the water and know who you are.' Bending hesitantly and anxiously over the brim of the well, the trembling creature expected to see the head of a small sheep, but to his great surprise what he saw was not a sheep's head but the formidable head of a lion, more formidable even than that of the wild lion out of the jungle. Joy then overcame him and he wanted to bleat for happiness—but believe it or not: the bleat became a mighty roar that made the whole forest tremble. And thereupon the lion disappeared into his immense jungle home.

May you always keep this short Indian legend in mind! When worrying problems hem us in and almost overwhelm us, when we think of ourselves as weak and wretched creatures, when we have no courage to go ahead, when we make ourselves dependent on the help of others, and when we sit in the dark cellar of ignorance and tremble with fear, it is time to remember this story and to know that all this is only the behaviour of a sheep, a tiny and ignorant sheep. At such times distress seizes our hearts only in order to teach us the truth, and it does not leave us until we have done everything to free ourselves from our self-created torment. Distress forces us into the solitude of self-contemplation, where we must turn our eyes inwards to find our true countenance reflected in our hearts. Then we awake and realize who and what we are. How often we tread our own human dignity under foot, and allow others to trample it down. In so acting we suffer so much from the humiliation that we are finally forced to dispel by our own efforts the distress we have caused ourselves. In the last resort inexorable necessity compels us to conquer our weakness and to become what we really are. And what are we? Not the body that is subject to vicissitude and change, not the soul that sways back and forth between joy and sorrow, but the SELF, which does not change, does not die and cannot be destroyed. Let your last thought at night before you sleep be this: 'I am the Self, the eternal, the deathless, the immortal SELF.' And let your first thought in the morning again be this: 'I am the Self, the eternal, the deathless, the immortal SELF.' Keep the awareness of your true nature alive in this way day by day and hour by hour. It will help you to know more and more clearly who you are and what you are. May you realize your true SELF and be happy!

YE DIVINITIES ON EARTH

'Ye divinities on earth! Sinners? It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Arise, O Lions, and shake off the delusion that ye are sheep; ye are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not ye the servant of matter.'

(Vivekananda)

INSTRUCTION FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS

Those who have read *Yoga and Health* and have practised the breathing exercises (*pranayamas*) and the various postures (*asanas*) will doubtless feel some benefit even after only a month of conscientious exercise. Many foreign pupils who have attended courses at our international Yoga Centre in Zurich ask us, upon returning to their homeland, to send them our regular weekly programmes. As the training at our School of Yoga is very concentrated and is based on self-control, self-knowledge, meditation and self-realization, we believe that the mere distribution of the sheets of exercises is not enough to replace all the instruction given personally to each one attending the school. However, so as not to disappoint our foreign pupils, we shall try to explain here the essence of the more important exercises. As these are also of an individual nature, the student must use his own judgement in choosing those which are best suited to his needs. For this purpose the stimulating or soothing effects of the exercises and their therapeutic and spiritual value will be specially pointed out. Not all these effects are described in *Yoga and Health*, which contains only part of this profound lore. In the course of careful and diligent training the student will encounter new experiences both on the physical and the psychical plane. This will encourage him to devote more energy to Yoga, as the multifarious effects of the exercises become more and more clear to him.

Let us consider first of all the complete yogi breathing system. Although this is described in detail in the book, several points are deserving of special attention. It is the only correct method of breathing, having the best possible effect on the body and on all its parts and at the same time collecting the distracted thoughts in a single focal point. This, however, must take place automatically and without effort. Breathe slowly and deeply, filling the lungs only half or three-quarters full, avoiding all exertion and strain. The breathing must be accompanied by a feeling of absolute relaxation and relief. If this method of

breathing is practised for a few minutes before meals each day—in addition to the programme given in the book—it will produce a tangible feeling of vitality in us, and we shall realize for the first time that enormous forces inside us are waiting to manifest themselves. The feeling may be compared with an uncoiling snake which slowly and majestically raises its head. Just as it is impossible to count the stars in the heavens, so it is impossible also to describe how much energy, strength and power is hidden within us. Swami Vivekananda says: 'What scientist has ever known and understood everything that is in man? Millions of years have passed since man first appeared on the earth, yet only a tiny part of his powers have so far been manifested. For this reason you must never say that you are weak. You cannot know what possibilities slumber below the somewhat degenerate surface. You know only very little of what is in you. For behind you lies the ocean of infinite strength and infinite blessing.'

The nostrils have a fine network of nerve endings whose special function it is to absorb *prana* and to conduct it direct to the nerve cells in the brain. From the brain and from the ganglions of the spine this *prana* finds its way into the whole nervous system. When we breathe in, we can consciously experience the flow of *prana* or life force into the brain, the chest and the whole body. It pervades the smallest part of us, bringing new life and relieving all nervous stress. This stress need not necessarily spring from outside influences in order to produce nervous symptoms. Very often when the nerves are short of *prana*, cramps, strain and nervous disorders ensue. This poverty of *prana* is due to inadequate breathing, lack of relaxation and of sleep. Here the very simple exercise of correct breathing is to be recommended either as a preventive or as a cure.

Recent medical research has shown that vitamins develop in the body in much greater quantities as a result of correct breathing than as a result of a vitamin-rich diet. Many previously unknown vitamins have been found in the human system. This only goes to substantiate what yogis have taught for thousands of years, viz. that when *prana* flows into the body an immediate chemical reaction takes place in the blood and a dynamic recharging of the nerves occurs, bringing about a general regeneration.

Yogis attach great importance to the purification of the body and thoughts. Here again, the simple but correct method of breathing rids the blood of impurities. Large quantities of oxygen are absorbed at each breath. The poisons of the body are thereby destroyed and natural heat is produced. An even blood circulation cures cold hands and feet. The complete yogi breathing system enables the other four main purifying agents to function normally and healthily: the pores of the skin, the sweat glands, the kidneys and the intestines all benefit from the impulse given by correct breathing. The effect of this physical purification, as in all Yoga exercises, is twofold; that is to say, it influences both body and mind. The thoughts and reasoning powers are made clearer, purer and more concentrated.

In what part of the body is the stimulus of breathing felt? Is it in the nostrils? Is it in the mouth? The brain? Or the lungs? You will be able to determine the exact place by making the following experiment: Sit in an upright posture on a chair. With eyes closed, breathe out slowly as far as you are able and remain for a few seconds without air. You will unquestionably point with your index finger to the heart as the vital organ through which the body is connected to life. We may say, then, that the *breath is the bridge between life and the body*.

The heart is the centre of our being. When we dwell in the heart, we feel safe and sound. The moment we leave it, we become uncertain. The further we wander into the periphery of the brain, the greater the resulting confusion: we lose our spiritual balance. But if we are capable of dwelling at the mid-point of our being, we find it much easier to control our restless natures. All our actions are then under attentive supervision, and we are sure of our decisions. That is why Swami Vivekananda says: 'In a conflict between brain and heart, choose the heart.' Our actions are then well considered and guided by an ever-growing power of discrimination. If the breath is kept in an even and normal rhythm, the whole being will be unified and concentrated in all its activities.

USEFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE YOGA STUDENT

1. Exercise with closed eyes to improve your concentration. It is then much easier to direct *prana* into any particular part of the body during the exercise.

2. Never forget, when exercising, to dictate inwardly the thought corresponding to each exercise. Look what indication is given for each posture on the exercise sheet. Under *yoga-mudra*, for instance, you will find in brackets: 'internal organs'. This means that the consciousness must be directed towards the internal organs during the exercise, and in your mind you should repeat: 'My internal organs are working better and better every day.' Or in the case of *trikonasana*, you will tell yourself: 'My whole nervous system is full of vital force.' The weight of these statements alone will make their influence felt during and after the exercise.

3. Spoken orders and their repetition have a penetrating and extremely powerful effect on our consciousness and our subconscious. Every order leaves an impression. These impressions collect in the subconscious and influence us at all times, whether waking or sleeping. Bad habits that would enslave us can be overcome by deliberately repeated commands to ourselves. The repetition of constructive, dynamic thoughts is the quickest way to success in the remoulding of a Yoga student's life. Our character is the sum of our habits. If these habits are weakening in their effect, the character will be weak. If they are strengthening, the character will be strong. By the repetition of good thoughts, words and deeds the yogi builds up his strong character, which nothing can sway or destroy.

If each formula is repeated in a monotonous voice, with the words slurred into each other, thus: 'Iii . . . aaammm . . . ssstrooong . . . iinnnn . . . booooyyy . . . aaannnd . . . iinnnn . . . mmmiiinnnd . . .', this will have an irresistible effect and will deeply influence our whole being.

4. Learn a few of the powerful thoughts given below by

heart and repeat them at times when depression and moods of negation threaten to take control of you.

5. A completely quiet state of mind is essential before beginning Yoga exercises. If our thoughts are distracted and restless, our efforts are squandered. But when our minds are concentrated, the dissipated forces are gathered together and stored in the great reservoir of the brain, the spine and the nerve centres.

6. If you have the luck to possess a special room for your Yoga exercises, carry as much positive strength with you as possible each time you enter it. Let your light shine there and drive out all darkness. Gather all your strength there to conquer every weakness. Gather all your peace there to still every storm. Leave distraction outside. Make it a habit never to enter in gloomy and negative moods. Take cheerfulness in only, and above all take only what you really are. Yogis say that no trace of energy is ever lost. Your small room, which will gradually be filled and pervaded with the strength you emanate, will quickly become an island of peace into which you can always withdraw for quiet meditation. The mental repetition of the word OM will bring about a tangible physical and spiritual change in you as well as in the atmosphere of the room.

If you have no room of your own, do not let this worry you. A room is only an outward aid; the real house that shelters you is your body. 'Know ye not that ye are temples of the Holy Ghost?' Put a mat, a travelling rug or a small carpet aside for your Yoga exercises. This mat should never be touched by any other person. When you sit on it to do your exercises, consciously pervade it with your own emanation of strength and peace. Impregnated with your vital force and your good thoughts, it will soon exhale an atmosphere in which you can exercise in complete peace of mind.

If we continually repeat OM, our consciousness is thereby immersed in its wellspring, in the heart, where the corporeal consciousness ceases and man is aware that HE IS. Passing beyond the frontier of transient forms, we realize that we are OM, the very essence of life, which not only pervades the small wave of manifestation which is our body but pulses through the whole universe and fills the myriads of other manifestations with life.

7. It is important to remember that the life-giving *prana*

flows into your lungs and heart at each breath. This life force can be guided into any part of the body by the powers of concentration. Whenever a lack of vital force is noticed, it can be directed, after a little training, to the weakened part. For instance, if a cold is felt to be approaching as a result of a lack of warmth and bodily resistance, *prana* can be collected in the heart with the inward breath and then radiated like light beams into all parts of the body with the outward breath. In a few minutes enough heat is developed to permit you to resist every attack of cold.

8. The aim of hatha-yogis is to prolong their lives and to acquire occult powers. Yogis who seek the highest development and liberation from all material bonds, however, bring their bodies under control with the aid of a few health-giving *asanas* (bodily postures) and *pranayamas* (breathing exercises) and thus prepare themselves for the higher stages of Yoga, i.e. for the realization of the true self. They know that occult powers are a serious hindrance to their main purpose. A true yogi therefore condemns the mere idea of using supernatural faculties—although he may well acquire these by chance on his quest for truth—for he knows how vain and self-seeking a man may easily become as a result of the possession and use of these powers. There is no true value in them, and those who have them run the risk of feeling themselves superior to their fellow-men and thus almost always become victims of an overweening vanity. This should not mislead the Yoga student into thinking that the effects of his simple exercises are of minor importance. On the contrary, if they are carried out as instructed, they may have very profound effects in quite a short time. We must never forget that our aim in performing these exercises is to gain complete control of our health and at the same time to influence the spirit. Yoga is the highest form of self-development.

9. During the performance of the exercises there must not be the slightest haste. Yoga must not be confused with dynamic gymnastics, which drill the body and its muscles by active movement. Externally the Yoga student is passive, but in reality nobody could be more active than he, for he is intensely occupied with the task of establishing absolute discipline and control over natural forces which are chaotic if left to themselves. Every Yoga exercise automatically has the effect of bringing us into a

state of inner peace and order, which in itself is a mark of great self-control. Avoid therefore every rapid and energetic movement. Make it a habit to perform each motion quietly and unhurriedly. In this way peace, health and strength will soon be attained and will remain with you as a permanent unity.

10. Do not be discouraged if you encounter a few difficulties at the outset of your training. None of the exercises must be forced or carried beyond individual abilities, as otherwise disturbances may result and may have an injurious effect on body and spirit. Exercise with great patience and equanimity. Time will then bring you rich rewards. The *padmasana* exercise (lotus seat) in particular must never be overdone, as this might cause injury to sinews and joints. The gradual mastering of this position, as well as those of *siddhasana* (sitting cross-legged) and *vajrasana* (with bent arms and legs) is most important to the yogi, for he knows that they have the effect of a dam, collecting and controlling the enormous energies flowing into the lower regions of the body. These energies can thus be easily stored in the large nerve centres or plexuses, forming that reservoir of unlimited strength which is always available to the yogi.

11. A word about audible breathing is essential. When the Yoga student breathes in and out, not the slightest sound should be heard. In other words, you must not hear your own breathing. Free and relaxed breathing of this kind at once quietens the mind, gives us peace and enables us to concentrate. Yogis attach the greatest importance to conscious control of the breathing and emphasize that this is the first step towards the control of all forces acting within us.

12. Persons who tend to be nervous and hasty should avoid all stimulating exercises such as *bhastrika*, *matsyasana*, *bhujangasana*, *salabhasana*, *dhanurasana*, *mayurasana* and the like, since these might have unduly strong effects. The exercises mentioned should also be avoided during pregnancy and for three months after childbirth. An expectant mother should be guided by her own inner voice and should know how far she can carry her exercises. Apart from quiet deep breathing, the following exercises may be performed in a mild form: *trikonasana*, *uddiyana*, *vakrasana* (first phase) and other easy exercises.

Sentences that can be repeated orally or mentally

(Repeat each ten times)

I am free of all bonds. I am free. I am free.

My power of resistance is growing from moment to moment.

My will-power is growing from moment to moment.

The cause of every bodily disorder is vanishing. (*Use only when necessary.*)

I am fearless. I am fearless. I am fearless.

I manifest life in mind and in body.

Perfect equilibrium in mind and in body.

Peace and rest. Peace and rest. Peace and rest.

I am conscious in mind and in body.

Perfect health and strength.

Quotations from Vivekananda

The body is but the outer covering of the mind. Whatever the mind commands, the body has to obey.

Those who really want to be yogis must give up, once for all, this nibbling at things. Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life; think of it; dream of it; live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced.

A handful of strong men can move the world. We need a heart to feel, a brain to conceive and a strong arm to do the work.

I stand for truth. Truth will never ally itself with falsehood. Even if all the world should be against me, TRUTH must prevail in the end.

Those who are always down-hearted and dispirited in this life can do no work. From life to life they come and go, wailing and moaning. The earth is enjoyed by heroes. This is the unfailing truth. Be a hero. Always say: 'I have no fear.' Tell this to everybody: 'Have no fear. Be fearless! Be fearless!'

Ever shall the soul be free! We must have freedom from bondage, however sweet.

The greatest men are calm, silent and unknown. They are the men who really know the power of thought; they are sure that, even if they go into a cave and close the door and simply think five true thoughts and then pass away, these five thoughts of theirs will live throughout eternity. Indeed such thoughts will penetrate through the mountains, cross the oceans, and travel throughout the world. They will enter deep into human hearts and brains and raise up men and women who will give them practical expression in the workings of human life.

Look back on yourselves from the state of the amœba to the human being; who made all that? Your own will. Can you deny then that it is almighty? That which has made you come up so high can make you go higher still. What you want is character, strengthening of the will.

The whole secret of existence is to have no fear. Never fear what will become of you. Depend on no one. Only the moment you reject all help are you free.

Absolute control of nature, and nothing short of it, must be the goal. We must be the masters, and not the slaves of nature; neither body nor mind must be our master, nor must we forget that the body is mine, and not I the body's.

A man may become so pure that his purity will become tangible. Whosoever comes in contact with him becomes pure.

The animal has its happiness in the senses, the man in his intellect, and the god in spiritual contemplation.

Concentration will bring perfect repose to mind and body every time it is practised.

Every time we suppress hatred, or a feeling of anger, it is so much good energy stored up in our favour; that piece of energy will be converted into the higher powers.

It is the greatest manifestation of power to be calm. Activity is the manifestation of inferior strength, calmness of the superior.

Do not cling to old superstitions; be ever ready for new truths.

No blind belief can save you; work out your own salvation.

Good is near Truth, but is not yet Truth. After learning not to be disturbed by evil, we have to learn not to be made happy by good. We must find that we are beyond both evil and good.

The first veil to vanish is ignorance, and when it is gone, sin goes, next desire ceases, selfishness ends and all misery disappears.

Take a very, very high stand; knowing our universal nature, we must look with perfect calmness upon all the panorama of the world.

To think there is any imperfection creates it. Thoughts of strength and perfection alone can cure it.

Have no weakness even in the face of death.

(Quotations from the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, India.)

STRENGTH

Strength, thou warrior's breath!
Thou lord on the battle-field of life!
Thy voice is thunder
Roaring down the ages,
Washing the shores of the firmament,
Grinding the rocks in play
And blowing their dust from heaven to earth.

Thy throne is the warrior's heart,
Moving the mind and tongue
To act thy will!
Command! Who dare not fulfil?
Even the gods bow low
To touch thy flaming feet,
Thou blazing one!

Strength, thou feared foe of fools
Who hide their faces in the palms of death!
Thou mortal's highest hope!
Burn thou this frame
And let it perish in thy flame.
Transformed into a tongue of fire,
Let it remain a light alone
No shadow can obscure.

MEMORIES OF INDIA

When we look back over our past and recall the days of our youth, we must admit that many of the impressions that still influence us today were acquired in those early times. Over the threshold of memory rise living scenes, a fluctuating sequence rich in incident. To recapture these happenings, I must lower my nets into the deep waters of memory and bring up whatever they hold. Excitement and a thrill of happiness seize me at this contact with my boyhood. To set those glorious events down in writing and to convert the past into a timeless present demands the resuscitation of all my early experiences, as I relive the drama of those days.

Once more I am a boy, quiet and thoughtful, as I reflect on aspects of the past and on impressions that lie carefully sealed in the secret chamber of the heart. Although I was born and bred in the Christian faith, although a foolish fanaticism several times took possession of me, my heart nevertheless pulsed with the same rhythm as those of my Hindu brothers. For I often witnessed religious processions in which the expressions of zeal and devotion overstepped all the bounds of human feeling. And I too became a still participant who awaited the gay religious festivals for days in advance. Every month there was one of those remarkable holy processions, every week some religious meeting took place, every day brought some sacred impression—every moment, even, I breathed and lived in an atmosphere vibrating with the names of gods and goddesses. Although I had not fanned this fire to flame, I enjoyed its heat. Although the garden did not belong to me, I drew in the pure fragrance of its flowers.

The great poverty and the physical afflictions of the masses did not seem important to these people. The mere mention of the name of God seemed to alleviate all their pain. The paralysed beggar, the victim of leprosy with his face half eaten away, the man who, suffering for the sins of his fathers, dragged his ailing body through a life of penance, all these outcasts of society have inner riches greater than those of kings. God's holy name is nectar to their spirits. How often, in those childhood days,

the refrain of their songs of love to God rang in my ears! Once it was Govinda, Govinda, Govinda that vibrated again and again through my sleep. Another time it was Rama, Rama, Sita, Ram. Then it was Radha, Krishna, Parvathi, Shiva, Mahadeva, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Sarasvathi, Savitri, Kali, Ishwara, Parameswara, Vasudeva, Sukadeva, Vyasa, Parasurama, Brahma, Hari, Hara, Om, Om, Om.

The atmosphere of India is full of God. For the children of Bharata live in God, sleep in God and die in God. The strength of the untutored is his God. The possession of the poor man is his God. The comforter of the sufferer is his God. For the Hindu this life is a passing thing. The pleasures of the flesh give him no lasting satisfaction, and from his birth onwards he drinks with his mother's milk the knowledge of his ancestors, the wise men and *rishis*: that the only permanent reality that overtops mortal nature is God. For the Hindu there is no dividing line between himself and his God. There is instead a connection as close as that between mother and son or father and son. The idea of heaven and of the beyond does not exist for the Hindu, for he does not wish to drag on this earthly, material existence in another form. His wish is to perfect himself, to rise from his present state to that of a divine instrument, and to attain divinity. 'Ye must be perfect, even as your father, which is in heaven, is perfect'—and for him this is no mere dictum. For his conception of human development is that of growth from childhood, youth and manhood to divinity. Often my childish fanaticism spoke in favour of Christianity. I did not then see that this was only one of the many possible ways, one means to the same end. I stood up for Christianity as the only right goal, and built about me the unstable fortress of fanaticism. 'You Christians fight against each other,' a simple Hindu told me. 'Be a Christ, if you wish to be a Christian.' Confused and perplexed by so true a word, I had to confess that he was right. I recognized that I represented a militant society that called itself 'Christian' and did not by any means act in accordance with the teachings of Christ.

The Hindu is very practical in his religion. He strives for the realization of God in his daily life. The deep rift we Christians make when we turn our religion into a Sunday affair is entirely absent from the Hindu's faith. When I wanted, many years

later in Europe, to withdraw my mind into the peace of God and therefore turned my steps on a week-day to a beautiful Christian church, I found only a closed and heavily bolted door before me and had to turn away again, deeply disillusioned. As I thoughtfully descended the steps, it became clear to me why God is so unattainable for the Christian.

When the busy traffic of Madras died down, I often saw stray cows settle in the middle of the street, which an hour before had been a scene of bustling life. Hundreds of homeless, who have not had a roof over their heads for years, also foregather there. Some come alone, some with their families, each one carrying with him his only wordly possessions, a straw mat and a loincloth. Sweeping the dust from the pavement, they spread out their mats and sleep on them till the first traffic once more drives them off on their endless wanderings.

Nor is it anything unusual to see a sweet shop quickly cleaned after closing time and transformed, with a picture of a saint, into a little altar wreathed in marigolds, jasmine and roses. At ten or eleven of the evening word goes round that a Brahman or a wandering monk will sing and relate the great works, the Mahabharata or the Ramayana. In the space of a few minutes several hundred men, women and children gather before the shop. Sometimes the story-teller is very old, but he is a past master in the art of transporting his listeners into the world of the distant past, in which India shines in her unfading and immortal raiment. I have often stopped to listen myself, and the effect was such that my proud Christian attitude, which condemned Hinduism as ignorant idolatry, was soon swept away as the floodgates of this oldest religion on earth were opened. I could not help but feel how foolish and arrogant I was to think of my Christian faith as something superior. Very soon I rejected the crippling belief that only one religion is right to the exclusion of all others, a belief that encourages the power-seeking urge in man.

Many ancient peoples have epics that relate, in an exalted style, the feats of their heroes. But the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are beyond all description. Reading or listening to these epics, the common mortal rises from the human plane of our earthly existence to the spheres of the heroes, gods and goddesses. He is not merely an observer, he is an actor in the

events described. He becomes one of the five Pandava brothers in person, he is among them and shares their troubles, their tribulations, their victories and their triumphs. And who would not wish to accompany Savitri into the kingdom of Yama, the Lord of Death, to win back her Satyavan to life? What a flood of feelings, what an ecstasy of love, what pathos, what feminine charm, what faithfulness and what uncompromising courage! Even Yama, the great god, is powerless against such a love as that of Savitri, and gives her Satyavan back.

These stories often last till the early hours. The people go to their work with very little sleep, sometimes with none at all. On such occasions no attention is paid to creature comforts. Sometimes these story-tellings last for a week or even longer. But the patient crowd returns daily with ever-waxing zeal. As the spiritual teacher accepts no payment, offerings of food and fruit are brought. His house is the universe, his roof the blue firmament and his heart the people in whom the immortal message of the Mahabharata pulses. It is the message of the Mahabharata that today flows in my own veins, as in the hearts of millions of India's children. The dignified deportment of Drona when he instructs his royal pupils in the handling of their weapons can only stimulate in us the desire for perfect control of our human nature.

When Arjuna raises his bow and aims, Drona asks: 'What do you see, Arjuna? Do you see the tree?'—'No, sire.'—'Do you see the branches?'—'No, sire.'—'Do you see the bird?'—'No, sire.'—'What do you see then, Arjuna?'—'Noble sire, I see the eye of the bird.'

And who can fail to sense that he who worships as Arjuna shoots will also see nothing but God? And who can doubt but that, with such unequivocal devotion, the arrow of desire will find its mark?

THE LANGUAGE OF THE JUNGLE

Animals and birds, whether wild or free, certainly have a feeling heart and respond to the language of fear or friendship. In India, my old home, I often wandered for days in the woods and thickets of the south, drinking in the solitude and peace. I was looking for those men who, withdrawn from the restless world, live the life of yogis in forest hermitages, seeking that which surpasses every physical pleasure—those who no longer suffer under the heavy whiplash of the senses, who teach that satisfaction can only be attained through control and right use of the inner forces, those who rise to announce the divinity of man and to free him from the bonds of false education. I had the good fortune to find a few such supermen, who had scaled the summit of the inward Himalayas and had become part of the peace that surrounded them. Their hermitages were often perched like eagles' eyries on giddy heights, or sometimes hidden in the depths of dangerous jungles. Mother Nature holds these peace-lovers, who have learnt her mysterious language of non-violence, safe upon her bosom. For in her wide domain, where her creatures rely for their lives on self-defence, these men must abandon fear and aggression if they are to live on land that belongs to the animals. Sometimes a black panther, a beautiful but savage leopard or even a tiger may be seen lying peacefully before a yogi's hut. They have an instinct which tells them whether a locality is friendly or hostile towards them.

Sri Ramana Maharishi, the great sage of Southern India, was one day taking his wonted walk to the holy mountain Arunachala. He was accompanied by Madame Elisabeth Ratonyhi, former President of the Theosophic Society in Hungary. Upon entering the wood they came face to face with a tiger which was evidently intent on prey. The sage stood still, while his foreign visitor stared speechless at the growling beast that was approaching. Maharishi then clasped her wrist, and Madame Ratonyhi suddenly felt all fear leave her. A wild animal sees a person's innermost feelings, and there is no means of concealing them. It is no use to smile if the heart is full of fear; the animal will

sense the truth. Regaining her breath, the lady retired a few steps behind the sage and soon noticed that all sensation of fear had left her and that she had a feeling of absolute safety. She was aware of being in the presence of Maharishi. The wise man, whose language was silence, rarely spoke ten sentences in a whole day, for he was convinced that silence is the most effective means of action, since it communicates feelings with the maximum of intensity. He now spoke in a kindly tone to the great cat before him: 'Go away.' The words were very soft, like a friendly request. The crouching animal rose to a standing posture at this command and withdrew slowly the way the sage had pointed.

The sage later said that those who have attained that perfection which is their own true nature are able to exert any influence they desire on even the wildest animals. 'If we are capable of radiating real love, animals can do us no harm,' was his quiet reply to an astonished questioner in the hermitage.

In the early years of his own quest for truth, Maharishi regarded the vow of silence as a powerful instrument for calming and controlling the restless mind. Out of the reach of our feverish world, he lived alone in caves in order to be able to meditate undisturbed. In these sessions of inward contemplation he experienced profound states of being that often lasted for several hours. It is related that tigers visited him at these times and that some of them shared the narrow cave with him and kept him company. They showed not the slightest intention of doing any harm to the human occupant of the cave, in which some of them sought shelter for several weeks. They purred loudly in his presence and played as cats will.

Indians know that yogis are not averse to the visits of wild beasts. These may be wandering wild elephants or small deer that settle down in this peaceable neighbourhood. The interesting point is that all these animals become tame in the yogi's presence and cease to attack each other. Tiger and lamb or leopard and deer can literally be seen lying down beside each other. There is no fear on the holy ground of the hermitage, and one thinks involuntarily of the Garden of Eden, where love alone reigned, pervading the atmosphere and ruling all hearts, both of men and of beasts.

A few memories from my own youth here come to mind.

One Sunday morning we came home from church and found the gates of our country house wide open and the house empty. Monkeys are not merely a nuisance in the country, they may also be a menace, for they steal everything, food as well as objects. Doors and windows must therefore be closed before one leaves the house. We knew that my mother must be at home, and we were filled with anxiety when we could not find her anywhere. After long searching we found her lying supine and unconscious on the cold floor of the bathroom. As we appeared, a cobra of unusual size unwound itself from my mother's body and disappeared into the garden. My father, who was a doctor, at once began to examine the cold and rigid body. Fortunately no fatal bite was to be found. The heart was beating weakly, and there was some slight warmth about the head. After a vigorous massage, life returned to the motionless body and my mother was able to sit up and tell us what had happened. This all took place in the cool and rainy month of December, when snakes seek warmth. The cobra had come into the bathroom for this purpose, and when mother entered it had raised its head, hissing, and struck towards her. But as it met with no opposition, it had stopped attacking and glided forwards. My mother's instinct had told her not to try to escape, but the unwonted sight of the snake had frozen her blood; she had sunk to the floor and could remember nothing more. The snake had then curled around her neck and arms, where it found the warmth it was seeking, and had remained there till the noise of our arrival had disturbed it and caused it to escape into the garden. It was unusually wet and cold at the time. To have a cobra hidden in the garden involved the danger of being bitten unexpectedly, and for this reason a snake-charmer was called and soon lured forth the snake with the magic of his strange, monotonous music. My father had given strict orders that the cobra was not under any circumstances to be killed, and so it was carried back in a flat, round basket into the jungle whence it had come. My schoolboy nature at that time demanded death as the only fitting punishment for such an intruder, but I heard my father's friendly voice: 'She didn't hurt mother, so we won't hurt her.'

As a boy I was keenly interested in the lead-sealed tea-caddies that my aunt sent us each month from her big plantation in

Ceylon. These boxes awakened in me a strange association which made me shiver every time they arrived. The plantation was far away from civilization, and the bungalow stood alone in the middle of the plantation. There were many wild animals and snakes in the vicinity. The tea plants apparently did not offer enough shade from the burning sun, for snakes of many varieties lived close by. My aunt and her family were nature lovers and in their loneliness had made friends with several animals that visited them daily and took food from them. One of these was a huge black cobra which would slide up the steps to drink sweetened milk from a bowl. While drinking it permitted my aunt to stroke its proud and handsome head. Only one false movement of the hand, and at lightning speed the hissing head would have struck, and my aunt would have closed her eyes for ever. A single sign of fear would have been enough to betray feelings of apprehension and mistrust, and the cobra would not have hesitated to bite in self-defence.

At that age I was fascinated by natural science and spent my spare time outdoors eagerly collecting practical proofs of what I had read, heard or seen. Nature was my friend. Once when I was fourteen my father sent me into the country to supervise the rice harvest. There were many workers in the fields and I watched the simple, cheery singers as their nimble hands cut the ripe rice or gathered the golden corn. While the corn was being cut I saw big green snakes escaping from the field. They were about three feet long and three-quarters of an inch thick. I at once set to and caught about six of these long, slender creatures. Their movements were unusually graceful and swift, but by plunging on them I was able to pick them up one by one by their tails and to hold them thus at arm's length. In less than a minute all the men and women in the field had taken to their heels, scattering in all directions. From a safe distance they now shouted to me to throw the snakes down and to run away, as they were extremely dangerous. I had collected them for my teacher, thinking he could show them to the class, but was now compelled to let them free again, for the alarmed workers refused to continue as long as I held the snakes captive. As soon as they were dropped, the snakes made off and vanished. A peasant now came running up and begged me to wash, for one could not know what poison the creatures had secreted.

I assured them that I was unharmed, but he insisted on taking me to the nearest well and giving me a thorough scrubbing. 'Those snakes aim at the eyes and blind their victims,' he reproved me; 'lucky for you that you held them by the tails.'

I am a born lover of nature and of her myriads of children. For some reason I have a specially close relationship with snakes and feel instinctively that they can do me no harm, for I speak their language and understand them as did Mowgli in Kipling's *Jungle Book*. In the twilight the sparrows chirp in the trees in their hundreds, holding their daily conference about the happenings of the day. They twitter incessantly in a monotonous choir, often for more than half an hour; and then, as though at a sudden command, silence reigns. There must be some reason why birds all over the earth behave in this peculiar way. However loud their din, their chirping language must have some sort of sense if they converse so garrulously in it. The hissing of snakes, the chattering of apes, the cooing of doves, the purring of cats, the lowing of cows, the trumpeting of elephants and the roaring of lions, all have their meaning in nature's kingdom. Each of the creatures has its own form of expression, whether for wooing or doing battle. All of them, birds and animals alike, have feeling hearts and respond to the language of fear and friendship. The instinct that causes the lioness to drag her prey to her young in the cave is love. The instinct that tells her to protect her young against intruders is love. And the instinct that keeps her prowling at large in the jungle is her love of freedom.

A young monk set out to seek and find God. He had devoted himself to all sorts of difficult exercises, and although he had travelled far on the path of spiritual development and had achieved things beyond the reach of many, he still thirsted for the ultimate truth. He was regarded by all as a great saint, but he himself felt that his own accomplishments were not enough to give him peace. 'Time passes, and I have still not found God,' he sighed. Utterly dissatisfied with the ephemeral things of this world, he yearned for essential reality. 'What sense has life when I am not even able to understand my own nature?' he cried in torment. 'It is useless for a man like me, who has not been able to see God, to go on living. So now I shall put an end to my life.' In great despair, he went out with

this firm intention into the woods. 'This body is not worth bearing any longer if it is not the dwelling of God; it would serve a more useful purpose if it were given to a hungry tiger. I am hungry for God and a tiger is hungry for meat, therefore I will give my body to a tiger, so that it serves one end at least.' When he had reached the middle of the wood he lay down on his back to wait for a wild animal. After a short time a hungry tiger appeared and slowly drew near to its prey. The resolute monk lay motionless, waiting for it to leap. But to his utter astonishment the animal came near to him, stood still a few paces away and looked at him without making any move to kill him. A few minutes later it turned and went. The monk took this as a sign of encouragement and returned to his cave to continue his meditations. He was not yet thirty when he received the divine enlightenment. He was destined in later years to proclaim the truth about the nature of man and his earthly purpose in India and abroad. It was the very same monk that preached the gospel of the divine nature of man to the peoples of the West. He was the first who came to announce that we are not condemned to hell for our failings, and it was he who dared to declare that man does not rise from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from a lower truth to a higher. He taught that we have no reason to fear the mistakes we have made, but that we should regard them as a source of rich experience and instruction and should bravely rise above them.

One day he took a few of his European pupils for a walk over the green meadows near London and gave them instruction in spiritual things. The company followed him slowly, engrossed in the profound words of the young monk. Suddenly they noticed that an angry bull was charging towards them. They retreated behind the scattered trees; but one woman, pursued by the bull, was unable to escape and finally fell exhausted. The fearless monk hurried to take his stand before the woman. The bull charged towards him at speed, its horns lowered. 'At last my end has come,' the monk thought, and tried to estimate how far the bull would toss him and how many seconds' respite the woman would have to get up and escape. His feet set wide, his arms crossed on his chest, he stood and waited. Nobody can tell why, but the charging animal stopped suddenly before the courageous monk as though on the edge of an abyss. His

breath was hot and heavy. His red eyes observed his steadfast antagonist, and a moment later he turned and walked away, so that the company were able to leave the field, sheltering behind their beloved teacher. This monk was none other than Swami Vivekananda.

Such occurrences are common in India, and the great virtues the people ascribe to yogis are well evidenced by them, for they are facts and not inventions. Nevertheless, the Indians regard them as matters of minor importance. They ask instead whether such accomplishments can contribute to spiritual progress, and whether they help in solving the great problems of life. If a yogi has such powers over wild animals, they argue, what will be his influence on men? His shining example suffices to dispel every sign of human weakness, for he is the embodiment of all the positive qualities that every one of us seeks, in laborious struggles, to attain.

In India the animal creation is regarded as a living part of humanity. Beautiful animal legends and anecdotes are woven into the life-stories of sages and saints. What words can describe the fine and tender feelings that the great Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, transfer from the animal to the human plane? Like Indian art, the understanding and love of the Indian for animals have reached supreme heights; they are the magnificent manifestation of the finest feelings that can flow from a human heart.

INDIAN LEGEND

Vyasa, the great sage of Bharata, wished for a son. Full of humility he prayed and meditated in his hermitage in the forest. But his son refused to be born because he feared that his birth would cause much sorrow and even the death of his parents. Uma, the goddess of the heavens, continually drew the veil of *maya* from the boy's eyes, so that he could see the transience of all created things. Therefore he did not want to be born; and he knew too that the illusion of creation would not make him happy. But Vyasa entreated the goddess to shroud the truth from the boy's eyes at least for a short while. Uma heard his petition, and at the same moment the boy was born. His parents called him Sukadeva. He was sixteen years old when his eyes opened on this world. But seeing its ephemerality, he at once arose and left his home.

His sorrowing father followed him and implored him to come back. But Sukadeva's eyes were set upon the eternal purity of the Himalayas, which drew his spirit ever more strongly to them. The closer he approached to the white throne of the gods, the more translucent his body became, and when he realized that he was made of the same substance as the universe, he melted into it. Vyasa wept in deep despair. His voice rent the stillness of the mountains as he cried: 'O my son, Sukadeva! O my son! . . . O my son!' But the majestic mountains echoed only: OM . . . OM . . . OM . . .

Yet ceaselessly, in growing desperation, Vyasa continued to call his son's name. At last, swayed by pity, Sukadeva returned and asked: 'Father, what can you give me?' He stood there, bathed in dazzling light, shining like the midday sun, his eyes radiating perfect wisdom and happiness and his countenance full of peace. Vyasa was himself a great and venerated saint of Bharata, but he realized that he was here in the presence of one whose enlightenment was greater than his own. He folded his hands and, standing in humility before Sukadeva, said: 'O my son, what could these poor hands give you? What could these poor lips say to you? I have nothing but my poverty. But there

lives in our country a wise king, Janaka, who by his rule and the fulfilment of his daily duties has attained to peace and perfection. Go to him, and he will say you sooth.'

Sukadeva then turned his steps to the king's palace. Janaka knew of the coming of the wise Vyasa's son and made the necessary preparations to put Sukadeva's genuineness to the test. The palace guards refused the youth admission and turned him roughly away. But Sukadeva knew that he must see the king and that he was expected. He therefore sat down before the palace gates and waited three days and nights without taking food or drink. Sukadeva's face showed no dissatisfaction and no trace of offence, but glowed with peace. On the third day the king himself came with his retinue and received Sukadeva with great pomp and splendour. He was led into the golden palace, bathed, clothed and feasted. Yet his expression did not change. He was given costly gifts. But still his expression did not change, for he was inwardly free and did not care about outward things. When he had passed many tests, the king gave him a glass of milk filled to the brim. He had to carry this glass three times round the great hall, through the midst of beautiful and seductive women, and not a drop of it must he spill. The captivating music, the dancing maidens could not shake Sukadeva out of his equanimity—his expression did not change. Finally, as the culmination of the test, the king's chief minister transformed himself into a beautiful woman and stood before the youth, a figure of magical allurements. Such was her loveliness that none dare look at her, but all lowered their glances. But Sukadeva went over to the beautiful maiden, sat down beside her, addressed her as 'mother' and spoke to her of God. Thereupon the beautiful woman resumed the form of the minister, who went to the king and said: 'Know, O King, Sukadeva is the greatest among men.' The king then called the youth to him and spoke thus: 'Sukadeva, you know all there is to know. I can teach you nothing. You may return to your father.'

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: What is the Hindu's conception of sin, and what does he think of the idea that man is born in sin?

Answer: The Hindu feels the statement that man is born in sin to be the greatest blasphemy; for in creating man a sinner, God would be a sinner himself. The Hindu believes that in the act of creation God actually put part of Himself into the human soul. The Christian Bible teaches: 'God created man in his own image.' Thus the Hindu does not recognize sin as such, but says that the true nature of man is the strength God gave him. If man does not make manifest the perfection of his true nature, he is unhappy. His development leads him from the embryo to manhood, and from manhood to divinity. Recognition of sin is nothing but the primitive standpoint that gains the upper hand in the struggle to overcome and control the lower instincts of the body. As soon as these are mastered, man is saved by the spirit within him, which stands above everything that is mortal and finite. He who continually speaks of sin and can never free himself of the idea of sin must always be thinking of it. But to think of our imperfection makes us unhappy. Like their great teacher Vivekananda, the Hindus believe: 'If there is sin, it is to say that you are weak, and that others are weak.' In the great struggle of development man finally realizes that 'man does not advance from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from the lower truth to the higher.'

Question: What is the attitude of the Hindu to Christianity?

Answer: The Hindu recognizes Christ without reservation, but he rejects Western Christianity.

Question: Does the Hindu recognize the saving power of Christ?

Answer: The Hindu opens his heart to all the teachings of Jesus Christ and applies them practically in his daily life. 'Watch and pray, for the kingdom of God is at hand!' To watch is to be wakeful and conscious in all our actions. To pray is to act. For it is only for him who, while watching and praying, acts in the consciousness of his actions that the kingdom of God is at hand,

and he can enter it at any time. For 'the kingdom of heaven is within you'. Mahatma Gandhi made this thought his motto and often declared: 'The foundation of my life is prayerful activity.' If the teachings of Christ are applied in our daily lives, we experience the direct effect of the saving power of our own positive action.

Question: You said in one of your lectures that the Hindu does not pray but meditates. This statement is not quite clear to me.

Answer: I am a Christian myself, but my prayer used to be a long complaint, a grumbling lament. When I had made it clear to God what a wretched being I was and had convinced Him that I was a sinner, lower and meaner than a worm, I began to make requests: first for forgiveness, then for compassion; then I asked for grace, for consolation, for money and many other things! I did not succeed in elevating my spirit in the knowledge that I was a child of God; I saw myself rather as a notorious beggar! 'Give us this day our daily bread.' And I, like my Christian brethren, actually asked for food! Many years later the real meaning of these words dawned on me: 'Give us this day the bread of life. And let our hungry hearts receive Thy heavenly manna, so that our limbs are strengthened to do the right!' Prayer has nothing to do with an attitude that humiliates us. Rightly understood, prayer gives strength. To pray is to go forward on the path that leads us to God, till we finally find Him. Prayer is the unconditional surrender of our weakness, so that we may gain strength; of our sin, so that we may receive virtue; of our illusions, so that we may attain wisdom. This is the only attitude of the Hindu. Another way of attaining God is through meditation. The Hindu child repeats when it awakes: 'I meditate on the glory of Him who created the universe. May He enlighten my spirit.' By anchoring his thoughts in the perfection of the Creator, the Hindu achieves perfection himself. This process of 'fixing' the mind is known as meditation. There is also a direct form of meditation in which we identify ourselves with the innate Self of our hearts, which is divine. This way too leads to the ultimate enlightenment.

Question: Through the medium of Christianity, the West has brought India many cultural benefits and civilizing influences. Without this revolutionary change India would not have risen to her present position. Is that not a fact?

Answer: India has not been made any happier as a nation by the influence of modern science. We Indians claim that the position to which we have now 'risen' in many ways implies a decline, for it has made robots of many millions of people! When man becomes a machine, he is enslaved, and a slave knows no freedom. He loses his mobility and the power of spiritual development. India does not need any new culture; she has always had a high level of culture of her own. To model the heart, to manifest the divine, is the highest of all cultures.

EPISODES

Two former students of our school in Budapest, Timar Miklos and Kiraly Josef, who had emigrated to Australia some years before, were one day walking through the streets of Melbourne. They were just talking over the experiences of the years in Budapest when their glances happened to fall on a book in a shop window: its title was *Yoga and Health*! They were filled with jubilation to see the axiom that there is no such thing as chance thus confirmed: they had read the same book in Hungarian. Suddenly there was no distance any more: they felt they were once more united with us and the whole Yoga family; they recounted and relished once more all the memories that were so dear to them. When Mrs Haich and I received their happy news, we rejoiced just as they had done; for we too feel that we are united to all who once came or who now come to our school, and we know that neither time nor distance will ever be able to sever this bond.

'Tell me, Christian,' a worried mother once asked her son, 'how is it that I never see you doing your homework in the evening? How did you manage to pass your examinations?' She was afraid that her eight-year-old son was copying his exercises from other children. But the boy replied without a moment's hesitation: 'That's Yoga, mother!'

THOUGHTS ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Man is the culminating point of the creation. In him alone are animal, human and divine qualities alive and active together.

Which aspects of our nature are we to manifest? This is a question we can all decide for ourselves. To manifest the animal impulses of self-preservation, the human motives of reasoned action, the divine principle which is the expression of our true selves: this is the purpose of our earthly life.

The animal qualities in us reveal themselves in the two powerful instincts of self-preservation and procreation. They are indispensable to the continuance of our mortal life and our race.

The human qualities in us are the faculties of thought and speech. Life sometimes appears to us as a riddle whose meaning we cannot fathom. Our efforts seem useless, and we face uncomprehending the facts of our existence. Yet our birth as human beings has a definite purpose. And here an analogy may help us. Just as a seed encloses the possibility of a tree, so man bears within himself a divine core which he must one day make fully manifest. Where can we find proof of this? All the great masters have proved by their lives and examples that they have attained this goal. And nothing less can give man satisfaction. From morning till night, from birth to death, he is driven by an inward compulsion to do those deeds by which his potentially perfect nature will be made manifest. He feels unhappy and miserable when he has no means of revealing his higher nature. Yet man can only manifest what is already in him. His divinity is—and was from the first—in him, and this is his true nature. As his senses develop, light dawns on him, and reason draws back the curtain of doubt from his eyes. The Bible tells us that the day will come when truth will be proclaimed from the housetops. From what housetop and in what street or town? Is the body not the house we live in? Is the brain, which is the seat of the understanding, not the housetop, where the light of truth dawns on us? Whenever we comprehend a little of the

truth, we have captured light in our minds. Even if it is little, it is still truth, which now belongs to us. That is why Vivekananda says: 'Man does not advance from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from the lower truth to the higher.' In some life or other we must reach the point at which we realize the purpose of our birth, and our task will then be the conscious endeavour to make manifest the perfection and divinity within us. Are we not unhappy every time we fail to fulfil this duty? And is our heart not flooded with happiness when we succeed?

The force which gives life to the universe is *prana*. Its presence in us is life, its absence death. At every breath *prana* pervades our body and sets its wonderful machinery in motion. It is through *prana* that the brain thinks, the mouth speaks, the whole human organism functions. Our power to move is generated by *prana*. An insufficient influx of *prana* due to defective breathing leads to a defective manifestation of the life within us. Our thoughts are unbalanced, our words lifeless and our actions devoid of force. That is why Yoga emphasizes the need for correct breathing as the only way to control *prana* and its manifestations. This control of *prana* by correct breathing, as taught by Yoga, is called *pranayama*. It must not be regarded, however, as a series of breathing exercises, but as a science that teaches us to control *prana* and to guide it into our bodies by correct, consciously regulated breathing.

Life reveals itself in man as (1) bodily force, (2) nervous force, (3) sexual force, (4) force of will, (5) force of feeling, (6) mental force and (7) spiritual force. Man is spirit, dwelling in a bodily form animated by *prana*, the primal force. It is for us to supervise these seven forces as they operate. If a defect appears in any of these faculties of expression, the fault is ours. It is no use seeking it in our parents or grandparents. We cannot inherit physical, mental or spiritual dispositions. The theory of evolution only has a meaning if we recognize the individual who now lives, grows, develops and finally casts off his bodily husk as the same being as will continue his evolution at his next birth with the sum total of the experience acquired in his previous lives. Our individual personality cannot be extinguished by death. If it could, all our striving and struggling, all our exertions would be in vain and utterly aimless. If death

were the end of all, life would be a mere gamble, with happiness or unhappiness allotted by fate. Such a random distribution would be pointless and unjust. If death destroys everything, there can be no evolution. The psychology of the modern West has attained a very high level of development, and it will not be long before it recognizes reincarnation as the last link missing from the theory of evolution. Without rebirth the individual has no means at all of attaining full physical, intellectual and spiritual development.

Indian psychology is old and timeless as the Vedas. It does not consist, however, in observation based on experiment, with the recording of healthy or pathological symptoms of the spirit and its manifestations, but is a science culminating in the fulfilment of self-knowledge. It is the oldest science in the world, occupying itself with the analysis of the subtlest strata of the soul and aiding man to advance from the physical to the spiritual plane. It indicates clearly the three stages of life: (a) control of one's own nature, or self-control, (b) self-knowledge, (c) self-realization.

Indian psychology teaches that, just as the innumerable impressions of the day are stored in the subconscious and influence our waking and sleeping lives, so the impressions of our life are assimilated as a whole after our bodily death and act upon us by shaping and preparing us for our next birth. It is as though a tree in winter collected all its strength in its roots in order to let it flow into its branches with the coming of spring. This process of assimilation after death may last a few years or a few centuries, whereupon the desire to live brings us back to this earth. We are the ones who choose our parents. We choose them because they have qualities, traits and constitutional dispositions similar to our own, and through them we appear once more in the lists of life, to continue our development. If there are any weaknesses in the seven forms in which life reveals itself in us, we have no right to declare that the reason lies in the family and that we have inherited the symptoms. We cannot inherit physical or mental characteristics. Ours may at most show some resemblance to those of our parents or grandparents. Why are we born English, German, French or Swiss? For the simple reason that we have characteristic features in common with these peoples and can thus develop smoothly

and unhindered among them, in surroundings naturally favourable to us.

Our attitude to our parents should always be one of gratitude and respect, for they took us into their loving care and through their persons gave us admittance to this world. We must never suppose that it is an easy matter to obtain possession of a human body. In India it is regarded as one of the three great achievements in life. The first mark of grace is to obtain a human body through the intermediary of our parents. The second mark of grace is the desire for liberation, to quench our thirst for the fulfilment of our potential divinity. And the third mark of grace is to find the right teacher or educator as a helper in our struggle towards perfection. Even if our parents have many failings, this fact is immaterial to us. They too will move forward in the course of their lives. For us they remain our human gods, who have given us life. We should never try to push the responsibility for our own weakness on to them. It has become a habit today to do so: nervousness, diabetes, cancer, weakness of character or morals—they are all simply 'in the family'. They are inherited, and we are therefore unable to surmount them. We shake off the responsibility by calling it heredity. In reality this is an unjustifiable excuse which has nothing but evil consequences. An attitude of this kind makes us entirely passive and robs us of our power to act. We lose all incentive to strike off on our own, we become dependent on outside help. Such an outlook is fatal to all human progress. The sooner we break free from this superstition, the better for us. The sooner we trust to our own strength and learn that we alone create our own unhappiness and we alone can free ourselves from it, the better it will be for all.

With what reverence, love and piety do we in India touch the feet of our parents, wiping the dust from their feet and touching our foreheads with it, while we say: 'Honoured father, loving mother, you are the givers of my life, I honour you as my gods and take the dust from your holy feet, for surely it is holier than I. Humbly I beg for your blessing.'—And blessed is he indeed on whom the blessing of his parents falls. If our parents say: 'My child, in spite of your weakness, in spite of your shortcomings, in spite of your errors we love you, and we know that you will one day be strong; our blessing be on you, now and

always,' these words are of immeasurable value and accompany us on our way even beyond the grave. They are words that fulfil themselves. *Let us bless our parents and never reproach them with our own foolish failings.*

Look into yourself and find in which of life's seven manifestations you are lacking. Bend yourself to the task and carefully seek out the cause, then conscientiously put the trouble to rights. Familiarize yourself with the thought that you are spirit, conscious, free, fearless and strong. Know that the manifestation of this spirit depends on you. Since spirit must govern matter, know that it is entirely in your power to manifest life as bodily force, nervous force, sexual force, force of will, force of feeling, mental force and spiritual force.

Yoga teaches us the most practical approach to life by helping us to control its seven manifestations. Yoga teaches us that if the breath is controlled all the manifestations of life can be regulated, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes. How can we achieve this?

We must breathe slowly and deliberately, as explained in detail in *Instruction for Foreign Students*, irradiating our whole body, even into its tiniest constituent parts, with the force of *prana*. This process may be compared with the radiation of light in all directions by an electric bulb. In the course of time it will become a habit to breathe in this way several times a day. This habit should be retained throughout life. Yogis assure us that this conscious control of *prana* finally enables us to obtain complete control over our bodily force, nervous force, sexual force, force of will, force of feeling, mental force and spiritual force.



OUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Just as a child at first requires help in learning to stand and walk, but is later strong enough to trust himself to his own feet, so those who have set their minds on higher things need assistance in the first stages of their spiritual development. Outward aids such as the scriptures, rituals, dogmas, sects, etc., have a real value until such time as a person has learned to be independent and has the strength to proceed without these props. Whatever means a person makes use of in his spiritual progress are fair means, since they are the ones best suited to his purpose. There is no greater freedom than the freedom of the spirit, and we have the right to choose and assay the various methods and teachings leading to the gates of truth. Our object is to find the truth, and our whole life, whether consciously or unconsciously, is directed towards this end. All outward aids are signposts pointing towards heaven, but heaven must be attained in the heart, and our leader is our own silent higher self. We should therefore never condemn a person for being a member of a sect. Some day he will certainly grow beyond the limitations which at present are necessary to him. A plant at first needs a support, but when it has become a tree it needs one no longer, and is so strong that even an elephant can be tethered to it. All of us have in the past borrowed thoughts from others, thereby imposing certain restrictions on ourselves which were nevertheless salutary at the time. But our demands grew with our spiritual stature, and we were forced to extend our conception of religion so as to include other points of view. In Yoga we learn to widen our field of vision so that it can embrace all the faiths of our fellow-men. 'Yoga makes a man a better man, a Christian a better Christian and a Hindu a better Hindu.' To give expression to the indwelling divinity is the goal of all the world's religions. If we take Christ's words seriously: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (Matthew v. 48), we are only obeying our own nature, which demands the perfect expression of what we really are. A great Eastern teacher preached the same message of strength: 'Go into your

own room and get the Upanishads (the Hindu scriptures) out of your Self. You are the greatest book that ever was or ever will be, the infinite depository of all that is. Until the inner teacher awakens, all outside teaching is in vain. It must lead to the opening of the book of the heart to have any value' (Vivekananda).

Yoga never demands the sacrifice of our reason. It only bids us: use it a thousand times more. Yoga does not require us to give up our active lives. It says simply: act, but know *how* to act. Yoga does not by any means wish us to push our understanding aside. It only tells us: discriminate correctly and act fearlessly. Yoga does not expect us to flee from the world and to retire into the Himalayas. It assures us: the refuge you seek you will never find in the outside world. It is within you. Leave the stormy world of the senses behind you, raise your consciousness to the central point of your being and realize that here alone is the force, here alone is the peace and here alone the refuge you are seeking. Yoga teaches us: do not condemn the world. Deify the world by your deeds, purify the world by your utterances and ennoble the world by your presence.

PRANA—THE LIFE FORCE

Indian philosophy asserts that 'there is no greater force in the body than *prana*'. It has taught for thousands of years that the whole universe consists of matter and force. In Sanskrit the primal matter is called *akasha*, while the primal force, which acts upon it, is *prana*. *Prana* gives *akasha* form, expression and life. *Prana* moves the millions of heavenly bodies in the universe. *Prana* is the pulse of life, which acts through all the creation. *Prana* is in our body, into which it carries life through our breathing. *Prana* is therefore the greatest force. Its presence in us is life, its absence death and putrefaction. Without *prana*, *akasha* remains unmanifested. But in the universe there is no vacuum, *prana* pervades all.

Prana flows through our body as a result of our breathing. If our breathing is in any way deficient, the manifestation of life, or of the life force, also remains deficient. *Prana* manifests itself in the body in the form of health, thought, speech and action. Deficient breathing is always accompanied by unbalanced thoughts and actions of a chaotic, undisciplined and restless nature. The results of this disorder are the bodily disturbances which we know as illnesses. Conscious and natural breathing brings our vital forces into equilibrium and makes undisturbed development possible. If our development is deranged and hindered, we feel miserable. Nothing in life can compare with the joy of undisturbed development. Riches procure us outward comfort and a few other amenities, but never true satisfaction or real joy. Man is only truly joyful when he can manifest himself without restraint, employing his powers to creative ends and furthering his own development.

The three greatest hindrances in life are hatred, false shame and fear. Sweep them away and go forwards! By controlling *prana* attain to ever greater stature! Just as a plant cannot be called a tree till it is fully grown, so man is not truly born till his higher self is visibly revealed. Life finally unfolds its highest and divinest gifts—whose existence illumines the world—

through the true human being. But at the beginning of his development man is still in the embryonic state.

What great bliss it is to be able to partake of divine growth! Think back into your past and compare it with your present, and you will realize the long process of development you have passed through. All our true knowledge is based on our own experience. Inward progress alone makes man happy.

The ancient Yoga system, which is a form of conscious self-education, offers us the possibility of accelerated development. Even a few simple breathing exercises and easy *asanas* (bodily postures described in the book *Yoga and Health*), if combined with meditation and *savasana* (complete relaxation), will give good results in speeding up our development. Life is evolution. When *prana* flows through the body, even the smallest parts of it are stimulated. What the Yoga student attains in an hour of concentrated exercise is achieved by the non-student only after many years. Yoga transforms matter into spirit. Yoga spiritualizes the body and all its powers, just as the goldsmith gives a mere lump of gold the beauty of form and pattern.

There are simple but effective exercises for bringing the dynamic forces of *prana* under control. Sit down on a chair, or preferably cross-legged on the floor. Hold the back and head straight and erect as a pillar, but avoid all stiffness and try to remain relaxed and at ease. With closed eyes and concentrated senses breathe in slowly and deeply, consciously collecting *prana* in the cardiac centre (the location of the sense of individuality in man, slightly to the right of the physical heart). Breathe out very slowly, deliberately radiating *prana* like light from the centre into the whole body. Consciously allow this radiation to flow out into your immediate surroundings. Then breathe in deeply once more. Collecting *prana* consciously at the cardiac centre, breathe out again, and again consciously flood your whole body with vital force and feel it flow around you. Repeat this fourteen to twenty-one times. Perform the exercise before breakfast, lunch and dinner. Make it a habit. *Prana* will then course through your whole system and will soon be brought under control. Its action is an intense stimulation of the whole being. At each outward breath *prana* can be felt flowing gently into the body. Breathing of this kind has many highly beneficial effects. A few of them, which anyone can experience after a

PRANA—THE LIFE FORCE

little practice, may be mentioned here. When *prana* is directed into the body as described, it gives fresh strength to the whole constitution. The nerve cells of the brain, the nerve centres or plexuses and the whole network of the nervous system are filled with *prana*. Fatigue disappears in a few minutes. Nerves and muscles lose their tautness and a feeling of growing freshness and relaxation ensues. The blood is purified and the recharged cells regenerate the whole system, making for better health. As the powers of resistance grow, disorders and diseases disappear. When the positive energies collected in so short a time make themselves felt, our attitude to life becomes more cheerful. With our minds at rest we can meet our obligations much more easily, since all our powers are now collected.

A few words on cleanliness are necessary here. It is of fundamental importance to keep the body clean. Apart from a daily shower and a wash before meals, it is essential to keep our physical emanation pure by conscious effort. All things have their emanations, a clod of earth, a fragment of stone, a clove of garlic, an apple, an animal or a human being. The emanation of *prana*, the vital force, can be physically perceived. Just as there are radioactive localities which can be detected by a sensitive instrument, so the human emanation is an energy that can be registered. If the physical emanation is weak, the body is open to every outside influence and becomes sick. Everyone has experienced the tiredness that befalls people in the company of a nervous person or in an atmosphere of hate and anger. When our powers of resistance are diminished, negative emanations can influence us. But if *prana* radiates positively and regularly from us, nothing can harm us. The radiation of *prana* around the body can be developed to such an extent that it forms a sort of protective envelope. It is always there, whether we know it or not. But the active awareness of it is still more effective, giving us the certainty of our own invulnerability. Otherwise, if we are exposed to influences from outside, we become irritated, for our sense of freedom is so strong that our nature desires to be free from every foreign interference.

What has been said above is understood in India better than elsewhere. I remember that my mother would never allow us as children to touch the cradle in which my married sister's baby lay. She told us that our restless emanations might disturb the

child's sleep, cause it to vomit the milk it had taken or even make it ill. These old customs must not be taken too lightly or discounted as mere superstitions. It is an established fact that animals protect their young against the touch of human beings. Hares even kill their offspring if they have been tainted in this way. Sparrows also pitilessly eject nestlings which have been defiled by contact with human hands. Only we humans permit our children to be cruelly handled by curious visitors, and do not realize that the tender body, which is still quite open to outside influences and really needs only the vital emanation of its mother's strength, warmth and love, may thereby suffer a brutal shock, and that all sorts of troublesome afflictions may be transmitted to the defenceless child by such thoughtless visitors.

The healthy instincts of the human being have been destroyed by his over-ambitious desire for civilization. His finest senses are blunted, his feelings numbed. He thus becomes an unwitting victim of the many influences that beset him. As he is incapable of defending himself, his nerves are overtaxed, his feelings become weak, and the centre of his strength is lost. Everything in life irritates him, for he has no power to defend himself. He mixes with the muddy water that flows round him and is mercilessly borne along by a flood of circumstances too powerful for him to resist. He needs cigarettes to forget his worries and deaden his nerves, he needs alcohol to raise his spirits. He depends on these stimulants to help him in escaping from daily monotony, from his inward emptiness, from his troubles and from the wretchedness that threatens to overwhelm him.

A normal, healthy life without extravagant habits must be the goal of our endeavour if we wish to weather the onset of the degrading and destructive dangers which today are a serious menace to social and national health, both physically and morally. For a community consists of individuals, and if these are unhealthy, no good work can ever be accomplished, no progress can be achieved. The healthy individual is an asset to the whole nation, for being part of the whole he in a sense forms the whole. We need calm and peaceable people, healthy and strong. These only can do good works and have a lasting effect for good. We need people whose powers are not squandered, but controlled and collected.

PRANA—THE LIFE FORCE

Yoga tells us again and again that a single small nation that breathes correctly could regenerate the whole of the human race. Comparatively little would be needed to attain this end. But in spite of our sympathies for suffering mankind, in spite of all our community spirit, very little is done to give our children the vital education they need. Both at home and at school the basic rules of healthy breathing ought to be inculcated. We have ourselves been able to observe the favourable influence of Yoga on delicate children. Some of them were asthmatic, others diabetic, some were mentally deficient and still others were the victims of complexes. The lack of life-giving *prana* is the cause of all sickness. If the roots of a tree have not the necessary sap, the whole tree becomes sick and withers. In just the same way the body suffers when bad breathing makes it deficient in vital force. We practised natural deep breathing and other simple Yoga exercises for many years with sick children. The regular supply of *prana* and oxygen cured most of them. Many of those boys and girls are today men and women with healthy children of their own.

The importance of correct breathing is repeatedly stressed in our Yoga courses. After preliminary relaxation we begin our instruction with correct breathing, which is continued for the whole hour. This not only harmonizes the forces of the body, but each pupil consciously tries to permeate not only his own body but all his surroundings with healthy radiation. Inward serenity is the first sign of progress. The Yoga students are told to apply what they have learnt in their everyday lives. Their positive attitude is their greatest strength in the present-day struggle for existence. It helps them to keep off all negative influences and enables them to work with complete inward peace.

Make it a habit to breathe deeply and slowly whenever you think of it. Each breath must be accompanied by a feeling of complete physical and mental relaxation. Breathe so softly that you do not hear your own breathing. That at once tranquillizes. Feel how *prana* flows through your body and pervades the atmosphere around you. Every time you think of it, be aware of your healthy emanation and live in it as on an island of power, peace and purity. Nothing can affect you, whether you work in a noisy workshop or among nervous people. This simple exercise

is also of the greatest value to doctors and nurses. It helps them to resist and neutralize the unavoidable influence exercised on them by the sick and suffering. When his powers of resistance are diminished by overwork, a doctor, too, becomes nervous. The unhealthy influence of his surroundings then acts on him more strongly and he is in danger of falling ill himself. Correct deep breathing will help him and increase his resistance in every way. The conscious guidance of the life force, or *prana*, recharges the batteries of nerves, brain and spinal column. If there is not time for an hour of Yoga exercises each day, at the very least conscious deep breathing with control of *prana* should be performed fourteen to twenty-one times, as explained above, three times a day before meals. This exercise too is concluded with three minutes of *savasana* or active rest (see *Yoga and Health*). This is the minimum for every overworked person who is not able to wrest more time from the slavery of his daily round.

Whenever we hear of someone who has success in his undertakings, we can be sure that he achieves it by concentrated and collected *prana*, which also reveals itself in the form of concentration in his thoughts, speech and actions. As a medical student in hospitals at Budapest I made a number of interesting observations. My friend, Dr Paul Schimert, who had graduated shortly before, entered a large surgical department where most of the patients were complaining or groaning with pain. The mere appearance of the doctor, who was a big, stately man, brightened the dismal atmosphere. 'How are you all, friends?' he would ask, with a deep voice full of warmth and confidence. When he looked at the patients, they sensed a sunny and healing force emanating from their beloved doctor. Strengthened by his power, none of them grumbled any more. One patient who, the night before, had been particularly loud in his complaints, began to weep with joy when the doctor came to him, and said he had never felt so well. I was astounded. Had I not experienced the suffering and lamentations of this man myself the preceding night, and then seen the influence the doctor had upon him, I should not have been able to credit it. Dr Schimert had a wonderful way of going about things. His positive nature dissipated every vestige of pessimism he met with. With a sure instinct he discovered the cause of many illnesses and was

recognized as the best of diagnosticians. The radiation of life-giving force or *prana* from him was distinctly perceptible whenever he entered the wards.

We might also take Coué as an example, a man who healed thousands of people simply by oral suggestion. What was the essence of that power that brought all who met him under his spell? He was a small man, of simple nature, but first and foremost he was calm. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Coué had an unmistakable control over *prana*, which flowed from him in a healing stream. In later years hundreds and thousands of people visited him. He had no time to talk things over at length with each one. He placed them all in a row, one beside the other, and said quietly to each of them, in a monotone voice: 'You are feeling better and better every moment and in every way.' The result was striking. Not only did all feel an immediate relief and improvement, but some even threw their crutches away and were able to walk home.

An insignificant speaker climbs on to a platform—and proceeds to carry away the masses with his words. A purity emanates from him and fascinates his listeners. What else is this but the control of *prana* or the vital force through a controlled life?

When the forces are collected, they shine through our thoughts, through our spoken or written words, through our deeds. The spoken orders we give during Yoga exercises collect *prana* as in a canal, and thus lead to concentrated action. These orders make an ever-deepening impression on the mind and are collected in the subconscious, whence they act on body and spirit. During simple deep breathing, as described in *Yoga and Health*, say to yourself, either aloud or silently: 'I manifest life in mind and in body,' or, 'I manifest the highest, I cannot be content with less.' The manifestation of *prana* takes effect gradually but surely through these powerful utterances.

Where *prana* is controlled, dynamic force is stored. With this force all things can be attained. Our thoughts become reality, our words are lent weight by the force of truth, and our acts become a blessing to all.

MEDITATION AND ITS BENEFITS

What is meditation? It is the incessant endeavour to realize our true Self. It is the tracing of the inner path of the spirit back to its source. It is the descent into the depths of our being to discover the reason for our existence. It is the attainment of the ultimate inner reality. It is 'watching and praying, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'. It is the knowledge and the experience that we are the living temples of the Holy Ghost, or of God, our true Self.

Meditation is not, as many believe, a mental escape into a state of passivity, or a weakness of Orientals, enabling them to withdraw in leisurely posture from the outside world. Nor is meditation in any way a form of mental speculation. It is not sluggish day-dreaming nor yet a pleasurable pastime. It is not the reliving in the mind of past joys, nor is it a form of reflection on a profound subject. Meditation is the direction of the consciousness inwards so as to find the source of all life's manifestations. Meditation leads to a state of being. Meditation leads to the accomplishment, fulfilment and realization of all that is highest, noblest and greatest; it leads to the embodiment of the most exalted purpose of our lives. Meditation is the attainment of that state in which the wondrous blossoms of the soul at last unfold to spread abroad their fragrance, beauty and divinity. It is the fulfilment of the highest stage of man's development, the achievement of his long desire, so that his actions from now on express the divine nature of his being.

Just as one can approach a peak from east, west, north or south, so the goal of human development, the crowning event of evolution, the revelation of divinity, can be reached by four different spiritual paths.

One of these paths is that of prayer, of love and piety, of the surrender of our lives to the guiding power of God in us. If you are a man of prayer, pray with a pure heart. Give your whole life and all your acts to Almighty God. Live in absolute belief in Him, in Him as a presence in your own soul, and act with a fearless heart. Your life will be filled with joy and happiness.

Give your weakness to the power of God, your darkness to God's light. Give your mistakes to God's wisdom. If you feel yourself alone and deserted in this world, rejoice and feel yourself alone with God. If you are in desperation, be so because you have not yet attained to the full realization of God. For the man of prayer everything in the world is pre-ordained and is in God's hands. He need have no fear, for his path is completely straight in his endeavour to reach the greatest and highest, the infinite. The man of prayer is always strong, for God is his eternal fortress and strength. His fearless attitude is this: 'If God is with me, who can be against me?' In such a spirit of devotion, in the total subjection of the personal ego, the divinity of man unfolds and reveals itself in his daily actions.

A second way is the way of action or work, since by doing our work perfectly—perfection being a quality of the spirit—we can attain identity with the spirit. Perfect acts and wisdom are one and the same thing, for he who acts perfectly is wise. Work well done is the highest expression of our true Self, an expression of the spirit. If you are a man of action and work, work in every way, but know the secret of work. You must know how the best results can be obtained with the least effort. Let the work be your servant, marshal your acts with skill. Do not be a slave of work, but its master. Act thoughtfully, knowing exactly what you want. Every action produces a reaction. Wrong actions produce bitterness or an undesirable future; for destiny is the outcome of our actions, be they good or bad. Controlled actions lead to a controlled destiny. Remember this always and act in freedom. You must be subject to nothing in your work. If you are such a man, the gates of life are open to you and everything will come your way. Let the great stream of life flow freely. The freedom of such a spirit calls life's blessings down upon him. Only the spirit of freedom empowers you to do your best and finest in your work. How could anyone who is a slave of his work achieve fine results? Good deeds purify the consciousness. If your work nurtures nothing but high and noble motives, your whole consciousness will be immersed in purity, perfection and selfless diligence and you will be incapable of expressing anything else but the quality of your true Self, you will manifest the divine nature which is really yours.

The third path on the great inward journey is self-control,

the building of a dam to stem the flood of natural forces which otherwise bear chaotically down upon us. Observation and control of the forces at our disposal automatically turn the consciousness inwards. This leads us to the wonderful discovery that the source of our strength and power is in our own hearts. By recognizing the divine nature of life in us, we also recognize our own divinity.

The fourth path leading to our inward goal is that of knowledge. Through the power of discrimination, which chooses the essential and rejects the trivial, knowledge wins the upper hand in all our acts. The transient nature of the outside world leads the wise man to give up all the bonds that link him to non-essentials. He learns to pass through this world as an observer who is not subject to the images of joy and pain, sorrow and gladness around him. Always at one with the spirit, he is free from all constraints. He is like a hero, possessing all yet bound to nothing. His power of discrimination lies in constant meditation, which leads him to the highest state of unity with the eternally free Self, the Self that is in his heart and in the heart of all created beings. The attainment of inward divinity in himself reveals to him the same divinity in the whole universe, of which he is only a part.

Meditation is thus a direct approach to the manifestation of our true nature and our inborn divinity, whether through prayer, work, self-control or knowledge. When a man prays, he plunges into his own heart to be united with God. This plunging is an act of meditation. He who seeks to control the gigantic natural forces at work in him also plunges deep into his own heart in order to reach the wellspring of life. This plunging is an act of meditation. The man of action likewise plunges deep into his heart to find the true motives of his actions and the inspiration for his task. This plunging is an act of meditation. The man of knowledge, who divides the essential from the non-essential in life with the sword of discrimination, who chooses the eternal and leaves the transitory, must plunge deep into his heart in order to rid himself of all dualism, he must find the centre to achieve unity, must cast off the personality in order to be his true Self. This plunging is an act of meditation.

Whether God is looked to as the Lord of all and is called upon by the man of prayer as his highest suzerain; or whether

the man of action receives inspiration from the depths of his own heart in order to leave by his deeds an unfading mark in the world; or whether a man imposes his will on the forces within him and commands them like a monarch at their source in his heart; or whether the man of knowledge finds the fount of all wisdom in his heart—it is of no importance which of these paths is chosen, for each one of us must finally knock at the same door of the heart, and must open it by force so as to enter and take possession of the divine treasure within.

How To Meditate

How is the man of prayer to look inwards so as to perceive the living God? How is the man of action to go into himself so as to find the right inspiration for his work? How is the man who wishes to train his powers to obedience and service to reach the source of life? And how is the man of knowledge to receive his wisdom from within?

Sit down on a chair with eyes closed and feet and legs parallel beside each other, or sit cross-legged on a carpet on the floor. Keep the spine vertical, with the head and vertebrae resting one upon the other like a pillar. Breathe deeply and regularly, and plunge with each breath deeper and deeper into the centre of your being. With the aid of a little training, at least ten to twenty minutes each day, the deep breathing will become smooth and automatic. Concentrate on the centre near the heart.

If prayer is the way you have chosen for approaching God, call upon God either in actual words or in the mind. The following simple and beautiful prayers, which are used by millions in India, may be a help:

‘O God, lead me out of unreality to reality, out of the darkness to the light, out of death to life.’

‘I meditate on the glory of the being out of whom this universe proceeded. May it illumine my consciousness.’

Francis of Assisi at first offered up long prayers. Later his prayers consisted of only one short sentence which he repeated many thousands of times. Later still he gave up even this sentence and prayed: ‘My God, my God, my God.’ And finally he kept

the essence only, leaving out every detail. 'God, God, God, God, God,' his heart prayed ceaselessly all through the night. One day he had the magnificent revelation that Christ, instead of hanging on a distant cross, was present in his heart. In this way the simple monk was transformed into the divinely pure receptacle of grace.

The man of action may adopt the same attitude of devotion or may follow the method of the man intent on self-control: Concentrate your consciousness upon the centre of your being and keep it there. This is not as simple as it may sound, for to gain mastery of the thoughts is the greatest of all achievements in life. Exercise constantly and with perseverance. The wandering thoughts must be brought to rest and the consciousness must be immersed in the wellspring of all grace. The continuous repetition of OM—which expresses the absolute—can be a great help; it collects the wandering thoughts and unites them at their origin.

Training in thought control must be undertaken diligently and regularly every day, or no results will be forthcoming. Nothing can be accomplished in life without concentration. The concentration of the consciousness upon a single focal point will bring enlightenment. Outward manifestation can only be successful when the thoughts are concentrated. Of what value are the thousands of thoughts that pass through our minds each day? How many of them have really brought us any benefit? Very few. When our thought-life is controlled, it is easy to achieve all our objects, for our forces are collected and can be directed effortlessly and with powerful effect to any task. For meditation to be easy, the consciousness must first be concentrated. Meditation then draws it like a magnet to the centre and translates us into the state in which we discover the eternal fount of life, the great reservoir of all the forces that manifest themselves.

The fourth way, the way of knowledge and wisdom, is the way of the philosopher. He does not look to a personal God as the last reality like the man of prayer, nor is his way that of the man who seeks to achieve his divinity through the highest standards of action, nor yet is it the way of him who attains godliness by controlling the world-moving forces in the microcosm of his own body. His way is the endless way of the Self, and by taking it he himself becomes that endless Self. His way is that

of eternal identity with the immortal Self, and in following it to the end he realizes that there is only one Self, which permeates the whole universe and manifests itself in all living creatures. In the knowledge that he is indeed the 'living temple of the Holy Ghost', he enters the 'kingdom of heaven' which is within him. In the realization of the true nature of his divine Self and in the knowledge that this Self is immortal, he sees that infinity cannot be divided and that there is therefore no duality. Everything is the Self, the One, with no second. The path of meditation which he follows is that of incessant identification with the true Self.—'I am what I am. I am the Self, the deathless, the almighty, the eternal. I am the Self, the infinite, without bonds, without darkness, without suffering.' The struggle for discrimination leads to victory over the personal ego. The man who takes this path regards his physical and mental qualities as his servants and the Self as the lord of all. His choice of the essential things brings him deliverance and absolute freedom in life. He has harnessed and re-directed the warring senses so that they can serve in the high mission of manifesting the true and divine qualities. He is a hero, for his strength is the strength of the Self, his law is the law of the Self, his actions are the actions of the Self and his life is the perpetual manifestation of the Self.

Each of these four forms of meditation brings us new and unknown experiences. As we tear down veil by veil in our advance and penetrate ever deeper into the profundities of our being, we enter the realm of the spirit and experience step by step the divine nature of our true soul. The blessings of meditation are manifold:

(a) When the consciousness is directed inwards, it receives insight and gives us the power of discrimination.

(b) The dualism of the consciousness, which expresses itself in the form of doubt, comes to an end, and unity is gradually established.

(c) The stormy tossing of the thoughts is conquered. Only when the thoughts are under control can peace be attained.

(d) In meditation all thoughts, words and acts cease. A dam is erected to restrain all other activities, and the great stream of force is led back to its source in the heart by the power of concentration. Learning to desist from our habitual occupations

takes time and practice. Concentration is the collecting of the forces at the centre, the closing of the circle around them and the narrowing of this circle so that they are imprisoned in an ever smaller area. The smaller this circle becomes, the more dynamic is the energy thus concentrated. This controlled energy has effects of inestimable value.

(e) A weakened system soon regains its lost strength. Wherever a lack of vital force causes sickness in the body, this deficiency is gradually made up and the health is restored. Yogis say that meditation makes a person stronger and healthier from day to day.

(f) Yogis claim that everything is possible to concentration. Latent abilities are developed in an astonishingly short span of time. The powers of decision and of the will, as well as various mental faculties, are invigorated by it.

(g) The mediocre man complains because he has had no success in life. How can he expect success when he carelessly squanders his forces? From the earliest morning, when he opens his eyes, he begins the day with a stream of thoughts and a variety of activities far beyond his powers, so that by the end of the day his strength is exhausted. Since his acts carry no real force, they have very little effect. It is very different with the man who meditates daily. He becomes a reservoir of energy. His consciousness is drawn inwards and his nerves are calm. Only a man of this type knows what right action is. His thoughts are productive. They permeate his being and turn him into a positive instrument acting for his own good. They pass into his surroundings and create an atmosphere of discipline and tranquillity. His thoughts have a good influence on all who come into contact with him, they are never degrading and burdensome but always edifying and liberating. His words are full of his own strength and bring about helpful and beneficial results. His deeds produce the desired effects because they are accompanied by part of the concentrated energy which he always has at his command in his heart. It is because his deeds flow from the source, the centre of unity, that they are so balanced and accurately directed, that they cannot but find their target. It is the force and significance of his acts that achieve the end in view.

(h) We must not forget that whenever we plunge deep into ourselves in meditation, a transformation takes place in us. To approach the Self is to be like the Self, and when we return to

normal consciousness we already bear the features of the Self. As time goes by, we thus reveal more and more of the nature of the true Self. Every time we meditate deeply, part of the old character vanishes and part of the new appears. Part of our small personality, the personal ego, dies, losing its power over us, and gradually our true Self is born and gains power over us. True birth is the death of our personal ego and the birth of our Self. Till that happens we are in an embryonic state, ensnared in the personal ego, in the body and its wishes.

He who has self-control, possesses the Self. He who possesses the Self, possesses all.

(i) Working is also a form of meditation. What do we do when we work? We are in a state of unity and concentration. True action and work are only an outward expression of this state. Meditation helps us to work with concentration. Such work brings certain success. But when the forces are always being scattered and squandered, no work can be successful.

The person whose forces are being squandered is restless. The person who is concentrated is calm, for his forces are collected. Practise meditation daily. It will waken your latent abilities. When the forces are collected, every undertaking will be successful. The secret of work is to achieve a great deal with simple resources. In time experience teaches that work is no obstacle to meditation. As Sri Maharishi says: 'There is no conflict between work and wisdom.' The easiest control of the natural forces within us is achieved by meditation. The revelation of the divine attributes of the Self will gradually make headway, the demands of the body will decrease, and the forces of the instincts will lie at our feet, ready to serve us everywhere and always. For in the end every human being must conquer his lower nature and make it serve the lofty purpose of manifesting the godhead within him.

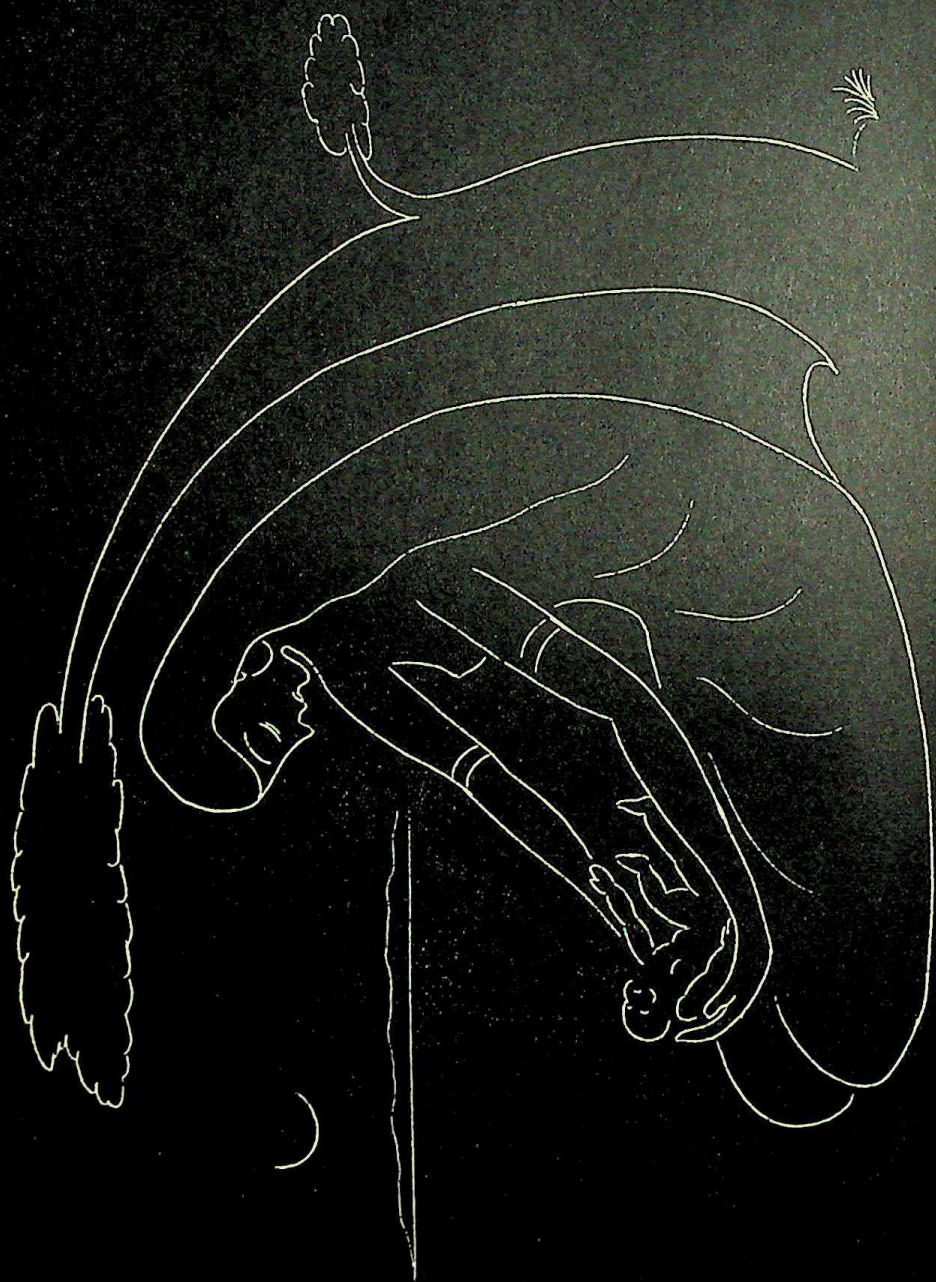
Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.

(Vivekananda)

THE INDIAN MOTHER

In India education takes first place in life. It begins in the womb and accompanies each one till the end of his days. The Hindu woman prays for a child and prepares herself for the great event with prayers and fasting. A child that is not conceived through prayer is thought of as only half completed. A child that is born in prayer brings happiness, peace and blessings to his parents. While the mother is expectant, she endeavours to enrich her soul, as she knows that this has an immediate influence on the treasured life that is still part of herself. The great Indian epic poems, the Bhagavad Gita and other religious books are a continuous source of divine inspiration to her. She chooses a god from the epics as her ideal, a deity which is the expression and the embodiment of the qualities she wishes to attain. She then turns her attention completely to this ideal. Bodily hygiene, pure foods and a healthy way of life are now the order of her day, everything being subordinated to the welfare of the growing child. The long months of pregnancy are passed in the silent accumulation of such impressions, which must make an ineradicable mark on the soul of the child about to be born. Often the ideal figure of a radiant divinity rises in the mother's mind; often she passes her hands over her body and says: 'May my little one have beautiful eyes, eyes which will never fear to look at truth. May my little one have a mouth like a lotus flower, a mouth that speaks fearlessly nothing but truth. May my little one have a beautiful, strong and healthy body which manifests nothing else but life. And may my little one have a soul which manifests nothing else but God.' This pre-natal education is no useless figment of the imagination, but a purposefully directed and powerful force. Finally the child appears as the fulfilment of all the sacred wishes of a mother's heart.

In olden times there lived in India a queen who had three sons. She gave them an education befitting their blood. She sang



THE INDIAN MOTHER

to them daily, leaning over the rocking cradle, the song of the highest love; she sang to them daily the only truth she knew:

‘O my child, thou art life, the infinite,
Thou art life, the eternal,
Thou art life, the immortal,
Thou art that, my child.
Thou art that.
Thou art that.’

The three princes grew up day by day in truthfulness, strength and courage. Each day they heard their mother singing this song when they opened their eyes to the daylight and when they lowered their lids to sleep. One day they had to leave the palace and go to live at the distant hermitage of a wise man, to be educated there as befits a ruler.—At that time wise men and *rishis* taught kings and rulers, instructing them in political, social, intellectual and other matters of importance in governing a people. For this reason even kings then paid homage to wise men.—Before they departed, the noble queen gave each of her sons a small golden casket which they were not to open till the day when their studies were completed. Long years passed before this day came. The oldest of the princes then opened his small casket and found in it a strip of paper on which was written:

‘O my child, thou art life, the infinite,
Thou art life, the eternal,
Thou art life, the immortal,
Thou art that, my child.
Thou art that.
Thou art that.’

He thought this over a long time and then said: ‘If my mother has seen in me the eternal, infinite and immortal life, what can a transient earthly kingdom mean to me? What use will riches be to me if death one day knocks at my door? I will withdraw into the depths of the forest to reflect upon the nature of things and will not return to my palace till I have found the eternal truth. How can I rule my people without wisdom? How can I

govern them if I am not able to govern myself? First I will have light myself, so that I can help others out of the darkness. First I will experience reality, so that I can help others out of unreality.'

His two younger brothers decided to do the same and withdrew into the silence of the forest to find that which their mother had seen in them since the day of their birth.



MOTHER

From the bosom of the sea
The fisherman brings home his fish;
From the depths of deep waters,
The pearl diver his pearls.
What can I bring home for you, O Mother?
What can these small hands lay at your lotus feet?
Where no net has been cast,
Where no pearl diver has dived,
There in the deep ocean of my heart
Let me dive to its depths
And bring up the wealth of my love
For you, O Mother.

IMPORTANCE OF THE THYROID GLAND

Comparatively few people realize how much can be attained through Yoga with how little effort. Yoga demands perseverance only from those who are intent on progress. The time is now at hand when mankind should begin to regard life not from the materialistic standpoint alone, but should learn to appreciate higher things. The general development of man is today being accelerated by his rapid mental advance. He will realize before long that he is pure spirit and that he must regard materialism only as a temporary training to familiarize him with the laws of nature in himself and in the outside world. He will soon find that man holds secrets more profound than any other thing in the universe, that he is himself the greatest riddle we are set to solve in this life. From time immemorial yogis have plumbed the unknown depths of the human soul and laid the results of their researches before the world. It is astonishing with what accuracy they know the anatomy of the body and even of the soul, with what scientific thoroughness—unattained as yet even by modern medicine—they see and grasp the functions of the whole system.

Hatha-yogis, who obtain unique control of their bodies and are even able to prolong their lives by the exercise of the will, teach those who come to them for this purpose quite simple exercises with which they can ensure good health and strength.

An excellent exercise which has beneficial effects in many ways is *viparita-karani*, which is also very easy to perform. This exercise is indispensable to people living in the stress and hurry of the modern world, for it permits us to control completely that important time-centre in the human body which we know as the thyroid gland. It is an established fact that under-development or deficiency of this gland in children is accompanied by signs of mental debility. Subnormal thyroid activity causes slowness of thought and speech, whereas excessive activity results in quick thinking and an almost unbridled tendency to talk and work, which leads in many cases to stammering, unrest, nervousness and even heart complaints.

IMPORTANCE OF THE THYROID GLAND

The body of a nervous person requires a good deal of oxygen on account of the excessive activity of the time-centre or thyroid gland. When oxygen is in short supply in the body, the heart must work with the same rapid rhythm as the thyroid gland so that the blood, by circulating more swiftly, can provide the whole system, from the brain to the toes, with sufficient oxygen and nutriment. In these cases, too, normal conditions can soon be restored by the *viparita-karani* exercises. An irritated brain is quickly calmed, the nerves are liberated from all stress and the heart, together with the vital thyroid gland, is regenerated.

In this 'inverted' position the passage of time is also reversed, or in other words we grow younger. Wrinkles in the face are smoothed away, colds are cured without trouble, grey hairs disappear and the whole system is charged with *prana* or vital force. Wonderful results are sometimes obtained by hatha-yogis as a result of *viparita-karani* exercises. They remain in this position for long periods and thereby release forces which rejuvenate the whole body and give the yogi an appearance bearing no trace of the passage of time. Some of them look as though they were no more than twenty-five, although they are in reality well over sixty. This is due to control of the thyroid gland.

The large solar plexus or *surya-nadi* lies at the root of the navel, while the site of the *chandra-nadi* or moon centre is at the root of the palate. In the symbolic terminology of the yogi, *surya* or the sun is said to be eating the life-giving nectar and thus causing man's life to become shorter every day. When in the *viparita-karani* exercise the bodily posture is 'inverted', so that the moon centre is below and the sun centre above, new life flows into the system and rejuvenates the whole body. This is rendered handsome and radiant by the constant supply of new energy, which gives the face a spiritualized expression. This exercise also enables us to prolong our lives.

Lying on the back, we raise the lower body and support it at the hips with the hands. The elbows rest on the ground. At the same time we exercise abdominal breathing. For a few minutes we remain in this position. As soon as we instinctively feel the need, we return slowly to the supine posture. The exercise can best be carried out in accordance with the instructions given in *Yoga and Health*.

SPECIAL EXERCISES TO PREVENT COLDS AND CONSTIPATION

1. Yogis regard the purification of the whole system as being of the greatest importance. They say that illnesses are very often caused by impurities. *Pranayamas* and *asanas* free the body of all toxins and poisons, thus making possible perfect health and long life.

2. *Kapal-randhra-dhauti* is an excellent exercise for dealing with chronic colds and bronchial troubles. The bridge of the nose is rubbed with the right thumb till warmth is felt. A little ointment may be used to prevent the friction on the skin from becoming painful. This exercise should be performed for one or two minutes three times a day before meals.

3. *Lauliki-yoga* is an excellent exercise which gets rid of minor and major bodily ailments. The student either stands or sits on his heels with his hands on his knees, and in this position contracts the stomach, internal organs and intestines and moves them from one side to the other several times. This movement has the same effect as an intense massage. Although it should be carried out vigorously, it should not be exaggerated. It should be accompanied by breathing exercises.

4. Constipation should be recognized as an illness. Every effort should be made to cure it, as the injurious effects of its constant toxic action are very numerous. If impurities stagnate in the intestines and cannot find any normal egress, they are partially absorbed by the blood. The result is general poisoning of the system, digestive troubles, headaches, disorders of the vision, nervous complaints and a host of other minor and major disturbances in the whole system. Constipation is an illness which causes the degeneration not only of the intestines but of the whole body. The poisoned blood supplied to the brain makes clear thinking and right action practically impossible.

Agnisara-dhauti is one of the exercises with a particularly strong purifying action, so that it frees the body of all impurities. The blood is cleansed by an ample supply of oxygen. The deposits which cause arthritis are dissolved. The nerves are

SPECIAL EXERCISES TO PREVENT COLDS AND CONSTIPATION

charged with *prana*. In particular, the intestines are enabled to function rightly and gradually recover their natural peristaltic movement. *Agnisara* eliminates all stomach disorders by developing the combustive process of digestion and supplying the blood with oxygen. This purification changes the whole constitution and gives the person who performs the exercise a spiritualized expression. Success in Yoga is certain to all who practise it. Their bodies soon radiate energy and strength.

Laying the right palm on the navel and the left palm on the back of the right hand, sit crossed-legged on the floor or sit simply on your heels. While practising abdominal breathing, press the wall of the abdomen out vigorously as you breathe in and push it in vigorously as you breathe out by pressing inwards with the hands on the region of the navel. Repeat this eight to ten times. Gradually the number of repetitions may be increased to fifteen to twenty-one. Owing to the intense effect of this exercise, it must be performed with caution and never exaggerated. (Complete relaxation must accompany every Yoga exercise.) Women should discontinue this exercise during the menstrual period. It has a very strong stimulating action on the solar plexus.

OBSERVATIONS ON INDIAN AND EUROPEAN MUSIC

I still remember a singer who sat in my father's room after his consulting hours and kept the whole house breathlessly attentive with his shrill, trilling voice. He sang old Tamil melodies to which my ear, accustomed as it was to English sounds, was ill attuned. As I went to an English school, my feelings were sometimes exaggeratedly pro-British, which was an unconscious attempt to overcome my inferiority complex. I was then about twelve or thirteen years old and was extremely proud of the few English songs I knew by heart. I now sang these full-throatedly to prove their superiority to the boring, monotone and—as it seemed to me—senseless Indian songs. 'Do you know what a famous English musician said about Indian songs and Indian music?' the singer asked me one day. 'In every type of music, whether secular or religious, Indian music has attained the highest level of development. It embraces a larger scale than Western music, as it uses not only whole and half-tones but also quarter-tones. Both vocally and instrumentally it expresses the deepest feeling. Like Indian art and literature, Indian music penetrates into the depths of the human soul. It awakens in man the echo of his higher self.'

From the *Atlantis Book* of music: 'The melodies of Indian music are unusually rich in melismas and varied in their rhythm, but seem to us monotonous in their sound. This is in keeping with the marked composure of the musicians. Just as in ancient China, music in India is supposed to be passionless, avoiding all strong feelings and inspiring peace of mind, self-control and virtue. Music is meant to induce reflection. The attention of singer and listener is concentrated on the observation of the *raga*, the complicated tonal structure, the equally complicated rhythm—melody and drum accompaniment are often used in counterpoint—and the artistic flourishes adorning the melodic line. The sound effect is of secondary importance.'

Twenty-five years have passed since then, a long stay in the West has given me an opportunity to compare many things. I

OBSERVATIONS ON INDIAN AND EUROPEAN MUSIC

can close my eyes to pray to Jesus with Bach in his crystal-clear kingdom. With raised head I can stand still and, joining in Handel's Hallelujah Chorus, can lose myself in exaltation and rapture. With the great comet Beethoven I raise myself out of the deepest hells of human existence and soar into his heavenly home, to be lost in his last divine symphony. With what volcanic power does he shake the slumbering soul of man! Freed from its fetters, it sets forth on its flights to God. But how few can acknowledge this comet, how few bear his sublimity! 'Hope, O man,' his music says, 'linger no longer in sleep and sorrow, but come! Come one and come all who are ready! Have no fear, hell has lost its power and can no longer hold back the winging soul. Rise, O man, for you too are a free and blessed spirit!'

These and other great musicians arose to illumine with their torches the dark path of man on the earth. I drink the nectar they offer me and feel my being blessed.

Indian art and Indian music communicate deepest truths and leave out all non-essentials. In Indian painting unnecessary incidentals and superfluous ornament are absent; the spirit of the work alone must emerge clearly. It is interesting to find the same tendency in modern Western painting, where the artist seeks to pin down in his work only the essence of his subject. Yet with the exception of truly talented painters, modern pictures reflect distinctly the pathology of our age. Where plain things have to be represented, modern art is often lacking in the first thing needful, simplicity, and does not understand its deeper meaning. Simplicity is not to be equated with emptiness, but should contain hidden riches. Where the spirit is absent, only a death mask remains, and *this* it is that confronts us in modern painting. The healthy-minded person is repelled by the result. The decadence in the picture is so obvious that the destructive effect of the missing spiritualization upsets the equilibrium and dislocates everything. Modern painters are still the mediums of their age. But unfortunately many of them manifest the delirious fever of a pathological decline. A medium is equally open to good and evil influences. Our own age is suffering from a consuming, hustling over-activity which is far from normal. It is here that the painter collects his impressions and the inspiration for his brush. All this applies equally to

modern literature and music, which are often loud and chaotic, a caricature of what art should really be.

Art, in whatever form, is always an expression of the spirit, whether in literature or music, in painting, sculpture or the dance. Art must elevate the human being, for it is spirit. Wherever there is a desire for true art, spiritual values will inevitably arise and flourish as a sure sign of development.

Music above all is ordained to elevate the soul of man. Mozart's music is like finest lace, ethereal and celestial at once. The weight of earthly things is completely foreign to it, and only a truly noble soul is able fully to appreciate and understand it.

Schubert's music is full of feeling and love; full of that motherly love and sensibility that soften every heart. It knocks at the door of human kindness and unmasks disappointment, pain and care; little by little it guides us along the path which finally leads to that deliverance that man finds only in solitude with God. Schubert's passionate yearning is pure and without stain.

Chopin's music is passion, red as blood and hot as fire. Here the struggle for union flames up, here begins the race for the unattainable, and volcanic eruptions flare forth when he almost grasps his vision. In his waking there is a desperate search for the vanished mirage. Chopin's loneliness breathes sorrow, for even this burning star had to follow alone the path predestined for him.

The fiery Hungarian Liszt was a pioneer of his day. Both as a pianist and as a composer, he brooked no restraint. He shook off in many ways the laws of classical music. To understand Liszt, one must raise oneself to a spiritual plane equally free and boundless. Only in the future will humanity understand him completely.

The flaming comet Beethoven cannot traverse the human firmament without setting fire to our hearts and hopes. He had a special message for mankind: a message of comfort, but full of courage; a message of prayer, but full of deeds; a message of freedom, but full of peace. His life was the mirror in which men recognize their own travail, toil and victory. In Beethoven's bitter inward struggle, when the human being in him was almost discomfited, there arose a divine strength within that cried: 'No, no, I will not lose it, I will keep it for higher things!' When Beethoven emerged from the struggle triumphant, he wrote to

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his friends, the Weigels: 'There is no greater happiness than to approach God and to bring him down to mankind.'

The blending of all the works these great composers and many others gave to Europe constitutes Western music. It is astonishingly rich in the gems bestowed on it by these elect! The classical music of the West appeals both to the individual and to the masses. These great creative artists move the multitude and carry it with them. They spoke all languages, they addressed themselves to society as well as to the individual and satisfied all longings. The individual keeps pace with the development of the community and finally acquires the ability to scale the heights upon which these Titans once stood at the very fount of life.

In Europe music flows like an indomitable river with whirlpools and waterfalls towards the open sea. It carries the listener on tumultuous waves to the silence of the spirit. In India it is quite different. There the development has been in just the opposite direction. From the monotony of the daily round the Indian withdraws to the wellspring of his heart to listen to the pure melody that rises out of its depths. Music is always individual, whether it is of a vocal or instrumental character. The Indian orchestra is comparatively small, so that every instrument is to some extent dominant, is clearly heard and preserves its full expressive power. All instruments, however, resemble the human voice: the violin, the veena and the flute. The accompanying drum only vibrates softly in time with the beating of the heart. Indian music serves the same end as all other Indian arts, that is why all its melodies are extremely simple: they seek to express essentials! To the Hindu, art is a kind of adoration, which is the highest expression and purest melody of his soul. The singer puts all his feelings into his song, giving it so much pathos, love, sorrow and joy that he moves the listener just as deeply as he is moved himself. When a few verses have been sung, certain motifs are repeated, then one or two words are echoed continuously, till finally one syllable only is sung in changing melodies; and in conclusion the whole song dies in the humming of a single note. The action contained in the song ends only when it approaches the overflowing heart. I have often noticed that singers begin their song with a powerful voice, but in my ignorance this meant nothing to me. The bridge of

years over which my way has since passed has given me the power to follow the flow of events with clearer vision.

Of all the songs of the Western world, Hungarian melodies seem to me the simplest and purest; they are full of a wealth of feeling and sometimes brimming with fiery temperament. Full of colour and contrast, they go direct to the heart of the listener. Indian songs have a similar effect on me, but to an even higher degree. Those songs which once seemed to me so lifeless today move me deeply. Long-forgotten figures now arise before my mind's eye when I sing to myself the song of praise to the rain and the gods. When Indians sing, faces are lightened by pure joy and divine sparks glint in the listeners' eyes. I cannot listen to Indian songs without being moved to tears. Not that the songs themselves are sad; but they speak the simple, pure and holy language of the heart. Whatever comes from the heart finds its way back to the heart. Whether it is the simple song that our rickshaw-man Rama often sang, or Mahatma Gandhi's favourite melody, *Ragupathi rajava Rajaram*—I cannot rehearse it for long without falling into a trance and feeling myself adrift on those waters that no shore confines.

Whether it is a boy on the streets who sings at the top of his voice, or the conductor of a tram in the oppressive heat of the city; whether it is a group of holy pilgrims praising God or a procession that carries its gods with it, led by a half-ecstatic singer; whether it is women at the well who trill a melody about Krishna, or a few dancers performing a dance of adoration and love: I must confess that nowhere in the whole world have I found the same spiritual devotion put into a simple song as in India. When the tram-lines were being laid in our street by unmechanized human labour, the foreman in charge caught my attention; he sang a short text in the refrain of which, 'Kailasa!', fifty or more workmen joined. As a boy I followed these men's work with the greatest of interest through all their long working hours. I too joined in the singing of this word 'Kailasa!', that trembled in the hot air. It was not till much later that I learnt that Kailasa is the name of Shiva's throne, that stands on high in the Himalayas. It was the name of this god and his holy throne that helped these men to overcome monotony and fatigue under the merciless sun of Madras, and that thus eased their misery. And like them, many hundreds of street workers

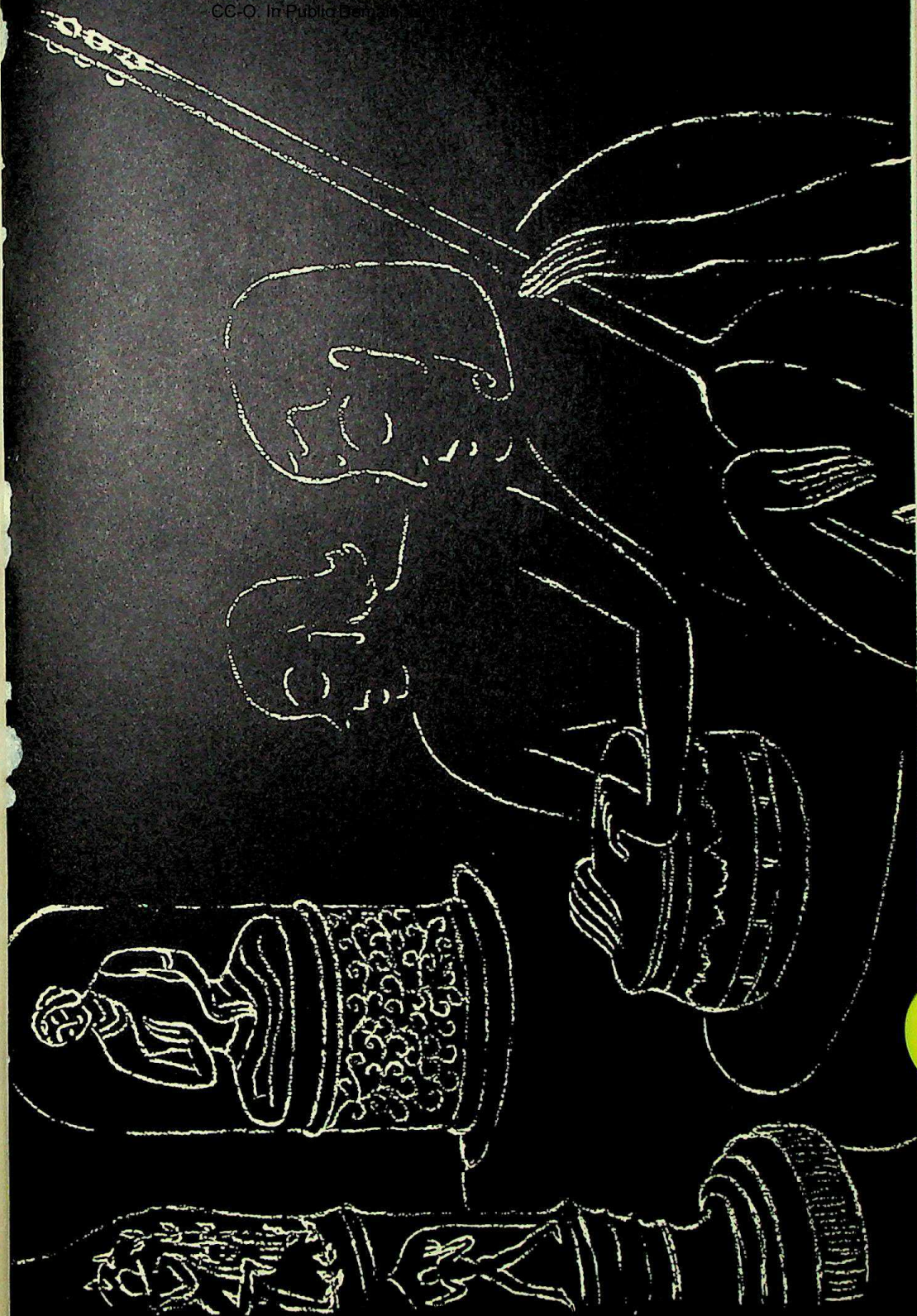
whose earnings are scarcely sufficient to buy them one good meal a day sing as they go about their work. They are men and women in terrible need; they are clad in rags and have no roof over their heads. Yet they accept their fate without demur. Govinda is their divine comforter, Govinda their only goal.

SAVITRI AND SATYAVAN

Sorrow filled the heart of the noble King Asvapati and his faithful wife because they had no son to accede to the throne after them and rule over their country. They fasted rigorously and long and prayed to the goddess Savitri, the wife of Brahma, to grant them children. Deeply moved by their sacrifices, the lotus-eyed goddess appeared to the royal couple and addressed them thus: 'Noble ones! Your prayers have been heard and your wish shall be fulfilled! You shall have a daughter, and many sons shall be given you. Rejoice, for this daughter will possess incomparable virtues!' Thus speaking, the mighty goddess blessed the illustrious couple and vanished. The next year a fine baby girl was born to them, and since they had been shown such grace by Brahma's spouse, the child was named after the goddess Savitri. It grew in beauty, truthfulness and wisdom and delighted the hearts of all who saw it. No other earthly being could equal it in loveliness, and none could look into its face, which shone with divine light.

Savitri grew up into a young woman, but as yet she had no suitor. Troubled by this, her parents reminded her of her sacred duty of choosing a husband. Savitri therefore entered her silver palanquin and set off on her travels, accompanied by her retinue. She passed through many kingdoms in search of the one who would make her heart beat higher; but he never crossed her path. None of those she met stirred her fancy at all! Not a single one possessed the simple virtues she sought, and all her searches seemed to be in vain. One day when she was passing through a wood, she came to an *ashrama*, a hermitage in which the blind king Dyumatsena lived with his queen and their only son, Satyavan. Here everything was peaceful and sacred, even the wild beasts forgot their bloodthirstiness and rested in the vicinity of the hermitage. There Savitri's heart opened in love and tenderness, and it was Satyavan whom she chose as her husband.

Like a shy doe Savitri stood before her father again and greeted him with folded hands. Narada, the great sage, whom the king deeply revered and loved, was also present. 'Welcome, my child!' the king said. 'Have you in truth searched through all Bharata for the partner best suited to you? Speak openly, before



Narada too, for he loves you no less than I.' So Savitri recounted the story of her long journey, which had taken her through many kingdoms, small and great. And then she spoke of him in whom her heart rejoiced and whom she had chosen to be her lord. Narada remained deep in thought and seemed little pleased by this choice. 'Your decision is not a happy one, my child,' the sage said. 'I have known Satyavan from his childhood, and in spite of all his virtues he has one great failing.' Troubled at heart, the king asked: 'Has he not courage, love and wisdom, O Narada?' 'All virtues that befit a prince are his; he is brave as a lion and loving as a father; wisdom is inborn in him. Yet Satyavan still has a failing which neither he nor any other being can eradicate for him,' said the sage in the oppressive silence. 'And what is this failing that no mortal can overcome?' asked the king. 'It is the will of fate that Satyavan shall die in twelve moons,' replied the sage and looked lovingly at the young woman. 'Did you hear, my child? Did you hear the verdict of the gods on the fate of Satyavan? Choose another husband who will live long and bless you with children and with happiness!' her father entreated her. 'The dice has fallen, noble father; my word has been given! When the tusks of the elephant are broken they cannot be replaced. So is my vow, firm and true, O father! I chose Satyavan and will stay by his side in this life and in the life to come,' Savitri answered. 'Your virtuous daughter is true to her word, O king! None will ever sway her now that her mind is set on her husband,' the sage remarked, and, turning to the girl, he said: 'This marriage has my blessing, Savitri.' Thereupon the young woman made her obeisance and touched in deep respect the feet of the sage and of her father. Then she withdrew.

Taking with him gifts, food and raiment, King Asvapati now journeyed to the royal hermitage, where the wedding was simply and peacefully celebrated. Savitri was very happy to be joined in wedlock with Satyavan, whom she regarded as her god and master. She laid aside her rich apparel and her jewels and dressed herself as simply as is fitting for one who is to live in a hermit's cell. Her purity and her loveliness were a delight to all, and just as she respected Satyavan's parents as father and mother, so she served them as a loving daughter. The hearts of all were filled with happiness, all, that is, except her own. For while her

words spread sunshine and hope, the thought that the fatal hour was drawing inexorably nearer weighed heavy upon her.

One day Satyavan took his leave of his parents. With an axe in his hand, he set off into the forest to cut wood for the sacrificial flame. Savitri knew that on this very day Yama, the god of the dead, would appear to carry her husband away. She approached the blind king, whom she honoured as her father, and begged him to let her go with Satyavan. 'You have served us lovingly all these months and never asked a favour from us or expected a gift. If this is all you desire, O daughter, go with your husband. Only do not hinder him in his holy duty.' With these words the king blessed Savitri. Satyavan tried in vain to dissuade Savitri from her undertaking, telling her of all the labour that awaited her. She only assured him that she would not be a burden to him and would not hinder him in his holy task. 'As truly as you, O Savitri, no wife ever served her husband. Never have you demanded anything of me. So come with me, lovely one! But always keep close behind me, for the path is very stony and steep.' Satyavan looked lovingly at Savitri and then began to cut a path for them both. Savitri was weakened by long sleepless nights, by her prayers and fasting; but she did not let her tender frame show her fatigue. Her heart beat faster at every step, for with every step Satyavan came nearer to his death! They were already deep in the forest, and when Satyavan had chopped some wood, his limbs became heavy and his heart lost its strength. Everything became dark around him, and Savitri knew that the hour had come. Satyavan sank to the ground and laid his head in Savitri's lap as he drew his last breath. Savitri was overcome with grief; she drew a magic circle around the body of her lord to keep spirits away, then she took her beloved husband in her arms and kept watch beside him. Before long the messengers of death appeared to fetch Satyavan's vital spark. But none of them was able to enter the invisible circle of love; none of them could seize the pledge of death; however they tried, they could not even come near. The flame of Savitri's love singed them till they fled. When they returned to the kingdom of the dead, they made their complaints to Yama, their king and lord. He at once set off himself to take possession of Satyavan's soul. A strange stillness lay over the wood, and even the rustling of the leaves ceased when the mighty, dark-

gleaming deity suddenly appeared. He was terrible to look upon, and fire played out of his eyes. He bent over the helpless body and drew the light out of it. Then he rose and turned towards the densest thicket of the forest. Savitri knew no fear and followed the god. When Yama, the lord of death, turned round, he beheld Savitri's sorrowing form close behind him. Then he spoke with a voice of thunder: 'Lovely daughter, no mortal can follow in my footsteps! Turn back and perform the rites of the dead!' 'It is not you I follow, O father, but the beloved figure of my lord. To him I am bound body and soul in this world as in the next. The bond of wedlock has united us, and that is eternal. How could I sever it?' So Savitri defended herself. Pleased by so much wisdom, Yama spoke: 'Ask for any favour, my child, except the life of your husband!' 'Then restore my father-in-law's sight, great lord and master,' Savitri begged. 'Be it so,' said Yama, and turning, forced his way through the wilderness of the forest. A little later he noticed Savitri's light step behind him once more. 'Stop, obedient daughter, and turn back!' the dark god ordered. 'No mortal enters my kingdom, either in the spirit or in human form!' 'Great god,' Savitri implored, 'he to whom I gave myself is the possessor of my soul. What is this body but a shadow? The light of my soul is in him, whom you made your captive.' 'Oh, you faithful and lovely goddess of mortals! Your words please me well. You may ask another favour. All wishes are free to you except only Satyavan's breath,' said the dread spirit. 'Then may my father-in-law regain his lost kingdom and all his possessions,' Savitri begged. 'This favour too shall be granted to you,' was the reply. But even after this the short, hurried steps behind the god did not cease. 'Are you still at my heels, Savitri?' Yama asked, for the faithful, sorrowing soul still followed her lost lord. 'O daughter, even if Satyavan is condemned to suffer a thousand hells for his sins, surely you will follow him even then?' Yama questioned. 'To share this life with my beloved, I would willingly do as much; to share the next life with him, I would do it even more willingly. Whether for virtue or for vice! What fire of true love does not consume the past? For good or evil, for vice or virtue, for life and death I will follow him I belong to,' Savitri answered. Deeply moved by such virtuous words, the lord of death granted her a third favour, though not the soul of Satyavan. 'Thou

mighty god! Let me bear a hundred healthy sons who will one day be able to govern over my father-in-law's land,' begged Savitri. 'You shall have a hundred sons, O Savitri,' said Yama, 'all of them happy, in magnificence and wisdom. But now turn back, lovely one, for here our paths divide: yours leads you back into your realm, the other leads me into mine.' 'O you great and virtuous god, whose promises are always fulfilled! You dreaded god of mortals and revered god of all gods! My hundred sons cannot be born without their father Satyavan,' spoke Savitri. With humbly folded hands she stood before the sombre deity. 'Your love has conquered me, O Savitri; no mortal ever loved like you. Take Satyavan back, and be blessed with all that life can give. Go, my child, I and the heavens bless you!' And so speaking, the lord of death vanished.

Savitri hastened back to the place where the dead body of her loved husband lay. When she laid his head in her lap and her prayer rose to heaven, life returned to the rigid limbs. 'Where am I, O Savitri? What has happened to the proud black god who seized me?' 'He has vanished, my lord. I will tell you everything, but first let us turn our steps homeward, for night is already falling.'

By this time there was great alarm in the hermitage. All were overcome with fear, for Satyavan and Savitri had not returned and darkness was now descending. Only the brahmans were full of confidence, for they believed Savitri's virtue to be stronger than all enemies. Moreover, the blind ruler's sight had suddenly been restored to him, and this was looked upon as a good omen that promised further blessings. And so it happened that the missing couple at last crossed the threshold and were received with great joy. All sat round the fire in the hermitage to listen to Savitri's story. How blessed they all felt in the presence of a being that even death could not vanquish! Savitri's love had clung to the hand of death till it relinquished its prey.

On the following day a messenger arrived with the news that the usurper had been overthrown and that the people were asking for their beloved king again. Thus the royal family returned to Shalva, among the rejoicings of the population. Just as Yama, the god of death, had promised, so it came to pass: Savitri and Satyavan were blessed with a hundred sons, and their small state soon became a mighty and flourishing kingdom.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Why do you say that true yogis who are striving for deliverance do not approve of the acquisition of *siddhis* or occult powers? Are occult powers a help or a hindrance to those in search of spiritual truth?

Answer: Let us assume that a person has powerful occult faculties, such as mind reading and clairvoyance even at great distances, that he can walk on the water or through fire, can fly through the air, can make himself invisible and can control the elements, rain, snow, heat, wind and earth; let us assume that he is even able to heal the sick and raise the dead, that he can prolong his own life at will over hundreds of years—what does all this really profit him? Apart from satisfying his own desire for fame, he gains nothing at all from it. All his accomplishments are only psychic *tours de force*; he himself may be compared with a giant of muscle who performs acts of physical strength in a circus, or with a virtuoso of the intellect.

As a boy I met yogis who had many of these powers. I believed that one had to have them in order to be a yogi. I therefore began zealously to perform a few advanced hatha-yoga exercises. I was in fact able to exert a certain degree of control over my heart, making it beat just as fast or as slow as I wanted; or to slow down my pulse to stopping point; or to hold my breath for several minutes at a time. With a certain concentration exercise I was able to produce an abnormally high or low body temperature. Another exercise made me insensible to pain and enabled me to stop the flow of blood from a wound. I had mastered various such accomplishments, but in the end I gave them all up, because I felt that it was only the body that had benefited. I had achieved a bodily health that was strong enough to ward off every noxious influence. Throughout the period of my training I had observed myself sharply and had noted to my sorrow that there had been no spiritual change. The true human being in me lay in a deep sleep and the outwardly visible, the ostensible being was awake. The state of animal health I had attained gave me no real satisfaction.

In India occult powers are respected by all, but a 'sixth sense' warns the searcher for spiritual truth that in the pursuit of essential things, in the quest for the ultimate reality, which is God, occult powers are an obstacle barring the way. There was once a man who was very proud of the great powers he possessed. When God saw his pride, he took on the form of a poor brahman and approached to teach him a lesson. He addressed the man thus: 'Sir, I have heard so much of your powers. What are they, if I may ask?' 'I can kill an elephant with a word.'—'Indeed?' said the brahman. 'How do you do it?' Just at that moment an elephant passed by. The vainglorious man observed it and spoke: 'Die!' The great animal fell down dead on the spot. 'And what will now become of this poor beast?' the brahman asked anxiously. 'Just watch!' said the other, excited by his own success. He threw a little sand on the elephant and cried out: 'Rise!' At this order the huge carcass shook itself, rose and ambled away. With a triumphant smile the man turned to his astonished admirer. 'And now? You killed the elephant and brought it back to life. What have you gained thereby?' And so speaking, the brahman vanished. These words brought the man to his senses, and he gave up his quest for power, which had made him proud and self-seeking.

Swami Vivekananda warned his pupils against everything mysterious and occult, which he regarded as an impediment to spiritual progress. He said: 'Spirituality has nothing to do with the display of psychic powers, which show on closer examination that the man who devotes himself to them is a slave of his passions and a very self-seeking person. Spirituality enables us to attain the true power, that of character; character means victory over passion, the destruction of desire at its roots. The whole pursuit of psychic illusions is an enormous waste of effort, it is the most concentrated form of self-seeking and leads to the degeneration of the spirit. This is the nonsense that demoralizes a nation. What we need now is powerful, healthy common sense, a feeling for communal ideals and a philosophy and religion that make true human beings of us.'

The earlier stages of hatha-yoga nevertheless deserve our attention. The simple breathing exercises and bodily postures alone have a powerful effect on the organism. In many schools in India Yoga exercises are performed for half an hour in the open

air. Their regenerating effect enables the pupils to concentrate better. The receptivity of the mind rapidly increases and restlessness disappears. The *asanas* act on the spirit. With very little effort the mind is strengthened; the will-power is developed; and with the powers of resistance the ability to reach decisions and all other positive qualities are improved.

Question: Are the exercises not too complicated and too difficult for the average European?

Answer: On the contrary! The exercises I learned from my master Mohan Singh can be performed by both children and adults.

In the complete yogi breathing system the three parts of the lungs, the upper, middle and lower regions, are all properly used. The whole organism benefits greatly from this. The use of the lower part of the lungs ensures that all the abdominal organs and the lower limbs down to the feet receive an ample supply of blood. The correct use of the middle lung permits the control of heart, spine and nerves. The conscious exercise of the complete yogi breathing system, if practised daily, in the course of time becomes a habit. The student then automatically breathes in this way. Even if no Yoga *asanas* are exercised, but only a correct bodily posture and correct breathing daily, order is established in the whole organism. If the body is held upright, it is impossible for the mind to be 'crooked'. The equivalent of an upright deportment will be felt in the mind also. Conversely, an upright posture is not possible without an upright spirit. Each influences the other.

In India there is a wandering sect of fakirs whose members seek spiritual progress through a strictly ascetic life. They differ in this from their brothers of the self-chastising sect, who deaden the body by the severest forms of penance in order to win heavenly merit. The first sect attains physical perfection, cleanliness, purity and chastity; they earn their daily bread by exercising a few yoga *asanas* before the passers-by. Their intention is not to develop supernatural powers, like the hatha-yogis. My master used to show me all kinds of fakirs. Some of them were charlatans, others were mere tramps.

I noticed that the bodies of the fakirs who exercised hatha-yoga bore unmistakable signs of a refined, ethereal structure. Even the simple *asanas* bring about a radical change in the

organism. Latent forces are liberated in every exercise, and these transmute both the physical and the mental constitution. There is a sudden inflow of liberated forces, which manifest themselves almost at once. Just as an inspired speaker undergoes an immediate mental transformation, which can be seen by the expression of enlightenment on his face, so the simplest *asana* works outwards from within. 'The regular exercise of a few *pranayamas* and *asanas*—even over the short span of three months—definitely brings about a striking change in the pupil,' our master taught us.

Question: Does the science of Yoga not accord better with the East than with the West; I mean, is it not better suited to the mentality of the Oriental peoples, who are not as active as Westerners?

Answer: I understand what you mean. In thinking that Indians are a passive race you are completely right, but only in one respect. They abhor all superfluous activity that produces no practical results. After passing our life hurrying hither and thither, driven now this way and now that, we finally discover that in spite of all our efforts we have hardly moved an inch from our starting-point. For that reason the Indian instinctively lets non-essentials go and seizes only on what is essential. He gives up the chase after short-lived pleasures, and, although it means many rebirths, he begins to climb towards the goal of contentment. In his zealous search for the essential he is more active than any other race on earth. For the Indian has an ideal; all his attention is directed to the task of attaining perfection in this life. Most people have no real goal in their lives; their pursuit of pleasure is only an escape from suffering. The fathers of the Indian people, the rishis and yogis of the past, saw the needs of their children and gave them the right guidance and spiritual teachings for all time. These teachings can be applied in man's daily life and are quite independent of his religious beliefs. The perfecting of the means brings the end within grasp. In other words: when the body radiates health and strength, the spirit manifests its true nature in all its aspects. A unique description of man's goal is contained in Swami Vivekananda's words: 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man. Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.'

Question: What does the word Yoga mean?

Answer : The word Yoga means union; union of man with God, the blending of the human ego with the divine. While every human soul strives for the same goal—union with its divine Self, which it instinctively equates with the expression of its higher nature by perfect action—the Yoga student strives for this end deliberately, in full awareness of his aim. Nothing less than the expression of perfection is his ultimate goal. He says: 'I must manifest the highest. I cannot be satisfied with less.'

In the average human being, the personal ego dominates all actions. In the more highly developed individual the personal ego, as embodied in human nature, is more or less subordinate and serves for the fulfilment of daily duties. The body of the yogi is subject to him and has no further power over him. He is the master, and the ego is the servant. He conquers his warring senses and subjugates them to his will. Only on this plane is a man capable of expressing perfection, whatever task he is engaged upon.

Thus you see that it is quite immaterial what a man's business is in this life, what religion he practises or what race he belongs to, for Yoga educates the human being as such. Yoga is the science of self-development, the only path to a speedier evolution.

Question : In what way is India experiencing a rebirth?

Answer : India's past, the splendid flowering of her culture, has often repeated itself, always followed by decline and degeneration, which succeed naturally upon each step forward in the nation's development. In just the same way a wave falls before it can rise to an even greater height and pull all the surrounding waves with it. The era before Buddha was a time of decay. His rise then initiated the greatest epoch of art and culture for centuries to come, both in India and China and in all the adjoining lands. How true it is that with the rise of a single man the world as a whole is elevated! Later, in the period of decadence, when the Indian people reached the lowest ebb in its history, when it seemed to have fulfilled its earthly duty and to be ready to depart, when age set its seal on its limbs and strength began to leave it, there came one from heaven whose divine touch once more awoke the immortal breath in the body of Bharata. This divine teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, and his heavenly envoys came down to earth about a century ago with a message for mankind.

And the life of this lofty one was a unique synthesis of all the religious faiths on earth. He was the embodiment of everything that is holy to the Hindu, the Christian, the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, the Jew and all the other creeds. For in his own life he followed the path of Jesus to reach the kingdom of God, the path of Mohammed to reach the kingdom of Allah, the path of Buddha to reach Nirvana and the path of the Hindus to reach Brahma. He did this to prove that, whichever path a man follows in pursuit of God, he always reaches the same goal; that every religion is a living path, differing only to suit individual and national needs, but leading to a plane on which man will be magnanimous enough to extend the narrow confines of his beliefs and to accept all the faiths of his fellow-men. Nowhere else in human history do we find a prophet with so comprehensive a mission. Nor was humanity ever in such dire need. The message and the messenger came for the whole world. The message was for the individual as well as for the human race. Up to that time every great teacher had come as an answer to the special needs of his own people. The prophets of the Old Testament brought Jehovah's commands to the Jews. They were not meant for the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Hindus or the Chinese. Jesus came both in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies and to bring a message to humanity as a whole. The prophet Mohammed offered his inspired teachings to his own people in Arabia. In the very earliest times the Pharaohs were the embodiment of knowledge, and it was through their wisdom that Egypt rose to power. In the last few thousand years India, too, has had its divine incarnations, coming to the people in times of need. Shankaracharya's dazzling intelligence and immense powers of discrimination silenced the conflicting opinions of the warring sects and scholars. By his reason and his insuperable understanding he overcame all his opponents and convinced them by his wisdom that the way of discrimination was the right solution to the problems that sprang from the prevailing spirit of prevarication. So unity and peace were established among the contestants.

At a point in India's history at which the way to God was overgrown with the tares of vanity and dry scholarship, when the heart became a bare and arid desert, God sent his gardener: Chaitanya. His songs refreshed the desiccated souls of millions,

who now began to tend their hearts, so that they might bear the fruits of devotion. His life stirred Bengal out of its apathy for centuries.

When finally in a time of decay the human heart lost its centre of gravity and the principle of destruction crept into man's evolutionary endeavour, when in a moment of confusion his hands were bent on evil and he gathered his strength to wreck his own edifice, there suddenly appeared a comet to change the destiny of man: Sri Ramakrishna.

His personality has taken on primordial importance for the human race in this second half of the twentieth century. Sri Ramakrishna and his powerful helpers have become the appointed leaders to guide mankind on to a higher plane and into a new age. Thus we hear the commands of his great disciple and spokesman, Vivekananda:

'I want sappers and miners in my army of religion! So boys, set yourselves to the task of training your muscles! For ascetics, mortification is all right. For workers, well-developed bodies, muscles of iron and nerves of steel!'

Yes, workers are needed for today's tasks! In the course of development all forces play their part. It is a battle between good and evil, life and death, past and future, man and God. And just as the flood of darkness threatened to overwhelm mankind, an irresistible river of spiritual strength suddenly broke forth and swept all before it. That is why we see religion today creating a new form of expression. And this form is: strength! Against the feverish condition of our time there is only one remedy: strength instead of weakness, courage instead of cowardice, truth instead of untruth, reality instead of unreality, light instead of darkness and life instead of death. Under present conditions there can be no further compromise. Religion must be a reality that quenches the thirst of one and all. That is why Vivekananda delivers a merciless death-blow to the past when he proclaims:

'The essence of my religion is strength. The religion that does not infuse strength into the heart, is no religion to me, be it of the Upanishads, the Gita or the Bhagavatham. Strength is religion and nothing is greater than strength!'

PRAYER

And may my whole life, O Lord, be a
Continuous song knowing no end.
And may I sing the endless song like a
Spring ceasing not to flow.
And may each breath of mine raise me
Nearer to Thee,
Till my ears hear nothing but Thy words
And my mouth speaks nothing but Thy message.

REINCARNATION

Before rejecting reincarnation as superstition, blasphemy and nonsense, before asserting that it is a physical impossibility, before high-handedly declaring its non-existence and putting the whole subject from us, we should face up to certain facts instead of evading them out of fear and ignorance. The theory of evolution was generally refused till Darwin rose to champion it. And suddenly the timeless Vedas of the Hindus were brought into the limelight as the most reasonable and clearest theory in support of evolution. Up to this point the West had rejected the Vedas as crude superstition. Today they hold without opposition the outstanding place they always merited. Students of literature from all parts of the world study the Vedas with their various branches of science, such as the theory of logic, of numbers, geometry, astronomy, medicine, etc. The Vedas existed long before the birth of Europe. As races, nations and civilizations spread over the earth, India bestowed its share of the Vedantic cultures upon the world for all time.

Galileo declared that our earth, though inhabited, was round, and that it rotated both on its own axis and around the sun. The Church opposed him and very nearly put him to death for heresy. To save his life, Galileo withdrew his statement, and so his writings were burnt in his stead. Yet Galileo was right. In just the same way many profound truths which have first been condemned as mere superstitions and rejected with a sarcastic smile have later been recognized as completely reasonable and fundamental principles of human knowledge.

To claim that there is a natural evolution, that a natural force develops materials from the lowly mineral to life's highest manifestation, man, to assert that the upward surge of life involves the transformation of material, and yet to reject reincarnation, is just as ridiculous as to claim that Columbus crossed the Atlantic on foot. The process of growth and development in nature requires millions of years. This process of transformation, this deployment of forces, this alternating rise and fall of energy waves, is what we know as evolution. But evolution is only possible through rebirth. Reincarnation is

simply the evolution of nature, which works up towards the apex of creation: man. Yet the human body does not cease to develop. The Hindu teaching assures us: 'Eight million bodies must be passed through before we reach the human form.'

Those early Indian thinkers, seers and sages, who gave the world arithmetic, the science of numbers, the *ayurveda*, the science of medicine, astronomy, the science of the stars, as well as other sciences, should not be underestimated in their statements. If it takes millions of years for black carbon to change into a diamond, if nature needs such huge lapses of time to make glittering and transparent stones out of opaque materials, if the pillars in stalactite caves require thousands of years to take on their conical form, if gold needs aeons to turn certain elements in the earth into its own nature, why should we be surprised that man should have attained to human form only after eight million births and a great number of metamorphoses?

Man is the sum total of all manifested energies on earth. He has evolved from the unicellular organism to his present form. He may be compared with an iceberg, in which water has solidified under extreme climatic influences and has thus taken on shape.

Primitive man, who has just crossed the threshold from the animal state, must now rise to a higher plane. As his consciousness expands its horizon, so his bodily shape and the features of his character change. By the end of his life he will have collected enough impressions and experience to determine the nature of his next birth. The amount of experience that can be acquired in the duration of one lifetime is limited. A child cannot turn into an adult overnight, nor can man overleap experience, but must acquire it all himself. How else should he learn? How else should he conquer the natural forces inside himself and use them on his upward path? How difficult it is to conquer a mere thought! But to control all the creative forces active in man is only possible if we become familiar with them, and that is something we cannot do in a single lifetime. Are we really familiar with our emotions, our feelings, our individual ways of thinking and speaking? A glance into the past brings a few scattered impressions into the focus of our attention. How many of them have really been of use to us? As far as we are aware, very few, yet unconsciously all of them.

Our progress advances at a snail's pace, and yet we move forwards and never cease to gain ground. How often must actions be repeated before an instinct is formed, a habit contracted, a trait developed! The instincts that are alive and alert in a human being were not acquired in a lifetime. The instincts and experience that help a man to become a good farmer, craftsman or artist come from experience accumulated in many lives. The nature and number of the facets of our experience differ, and that explains why people are different. Have we not found ourselves that we sometimes set about a job that we are doing for the first time in our lives with all the assurance and naturalness of long familiarity? Only experience can instil the right instinct in us.

Students of genetics claim that attributes of character are passed on from parents to offspring. How does it happen, then, that geniuses hardly ever have children with the innate outstanding qualities which would enable them to follow in their fathers' footsteps? If the laws of heredity are correct, Goethe's son should have outshone his father. On the other hand we hear of geniuses whose parents were simple and uncultured people. It is nothing unusual to learn that infant prodigies have parents whose intellectual powers are not at all highly developed. In cases like these the theories of heredity break down. Nobody can appear on this earth with borrowed abilities. He has developed them all himself. He must climb the ladder of life rung by rung. My nature may well resemble my father's—yet how much I differ from him too!

Just as I alone take my food, choose my friends, experience my feelings, perform my actions, and nobody else can do these things for me, so I am also responsible for my own brain and my own body. The same applies to the faculties with which I appear on earth, which are entirely my own. I do not need to inherit them from my parents or grandparents. How often we try to guide our children towards right thoughts and actions, and how difficult this task proves to be! Why should we then imagine that traits of character are hereditary? Such traits are habits contracted by the person concerned, and even though they may be similar to those of our parents or grandparents, they are essentially our own.

The law of gravity keeps all things in their places. If a stone

is thrown in the air, it must fall back to the earth. Water must flow downwards. This law also applies on a human plane. Let us take an example. A family is founded. Six children live happily with their parents, love them and are loved in return. In spite of their poverty, they are contented. Later the children marry, but they still preserve their love and affection for their parents. An earthquake destroys the village they live in, and all die. What is now the fate of this poor family?

The totality of the forces manifested in the love which held this family together cannot be destroyed, even by the destruction of their bodies. Since wishes have a magnetic power of attraction, they will bring this family together again, and in conditions which permit the fulfilment of their deepest desires; it may be that they are no longer six children with the same parents, but close friends who work together for the good of their country.

Physics proves that not an ounce of energy can ever be lost in the universe. According to the law of causality, a whirlwind may be produced or a flood caused and a country laid waste; but in just the same way mild and pleasant weather may prevail and the harvest be good. There is cause and effect in all things. Nature abhors a vacuum.

The energy consumed by the human body dwarfs all description. Thought sets the greatest forces in motion, speech lesser forces, while the forces manifested by muscles and nerves are the least of the three.

The law of attraction and repulsion can be seen in action on the plane of human feelings, according to the positive and negative properties developed by a person. Energies may attract or repel. Desire is the great magnet in the human make-up, setting unimaginable forces in motion in many forms and at many levels of intensity. Love draws all forces in a positive direction, and hate works in the opposite sense.

The growth and expansion of our consciousness during our lifetime take place as a result of the impressions that are always acting upon us. All the impressions are recorded in the sub-conscious and are for the most part assimilated through dreams while we sleep. Overwhelming impressions—due to the loss of a loved one, a natural catastrophe, war or some fatal disease—require a longer period for their assimilation. If necessary, this

process can be continued after the death of the body. The forces go on working without any interruption. They are like summer lightning in a cloudless sky: the flashes are not seen, although the atmosphere is charged with electricity. In other words, the forces which initially built up the body continue to exist in their totality after its death. After a certain lapse of time, and after the earthly experience has been assimilated, these forces again seek to manifest themselves under favourable conditions on a material plane.

Can we develop without rebirth? That is impossible, for reincarnation is the evolution of nature, and evolution is the law of life. An ordinary stone must crystallize into a gem or turn into marble. A seed must grow into a tree, a caterpillar into a butterfly. And man must be perfected in divinity, thus fulfilling the words of Jesus: 'Ye are gods' (John x. 34, Psalm lxxxii. 6). Evolution is the conversion of natural forces into human forces. The earthly element must be transmuted into a spiritual one, the human into a divine and the mortal into an immortal. 'Ye are gods,' says Jesus. How shall a man come to know this? Only by evolution. This plane of omniscience and perfection cannot be attained in one short life. It requires many births. It requires natural growth. Not one single piece of experience can be skipped. How much practice, how much repetition is necessary before a pianist can play a piece perfectly! To practise is to manifest an ability better and better, till its expression reaches perfection. The development of all our abilities proceeds step by step and with unfaltering certainty. The expression of a given ability is refined from life to life, till in one life it blossoms into perfection, as it did in the life of a Beethoven or a Mozart.

What would otherwise be the sense of our appearing on the earth? What would be the purpose of evolution? We certainly do not develop merely for the good of our great-grandchildren, whom we may never see in this life. We are certainly not merely fulfilling a patriotic duty towards our countrymen and our nation when we try to be better citizens. We do not make our progress only for generations as yet unborn. If that were so, what would be the sense of death? Why all this struggle for enlightenment if our development is to end in the churchyard? Evolution means unbroken continuity. The interruption of death permits the

assimilation of the experience acquired in each life. It is like nature's long winter sleep, which is terminated by the approach of the ever-returning spring. Life is a continuous process that has neither beginning nor end. Our planet was never uninhabited and never will be. Like the all-pervading air, which fills every interstice, like the ocean that gives us rain year in year out, life will go on for ever in a never-ending sequence.

In the book of *Genesis*, Chapter I, verses 1-27, we read the following account of the creation:

1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
2. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
3. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
4. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
5. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.
6. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
7. And God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
8. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.
9. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.
10. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.
11. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.
12. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
13. And the evening and the morning were the third day.
14. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the

heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

15. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.

18. And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

19. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

20. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

21. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

22. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

23. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

24. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis, Chapter II, verse 7:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis, Chapter IV, verse 1 :

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

We should never imagine that all this happened a few thousand years ago, and that Adam and Eve were the parents of mankind. We must never suppose that creation has ceased. The truth must be clear as day. No sentimentality must creep in to conceal the heart of the matter. God first created the four elements, earth, water, air and fire. Out of these four elements sprang the whole of the created world. The minerals, then the plants, then the animals, and finally man. Do we not see in this the sequence of creation? First the mineral kingdom, or the earthy element, then the vegetable kingdom, followed by the animal kingdom, and finally man himself. But this was not the work of a single week. It is an evolution that has lasted for millions of years. Creation has not stopped. We see it still going on in our mountains, in our woods and waters—everything is constantly astir, is in the throes of development, moves forwards and upwards and attains its zenith in the highest form of expression, man. If God had really taken clay, had created man with it in his own image, had breathed the breath of life into him and called his name Adam, he would surely follow the same rule today and would shape men from the earth of the fields and woods. Is there not here a much mightier truth than the touching story that makes God play with creatures of clay that come to life at his touch? With the axe of truth man has finally succeeded in splitting away the crust of out-dated beliefs and in realizing that the simple stories of the Bible are not to be understood literally, but symbolically. Read in this spirit, they reveal to us the highest truths and secrets of the creation. We must never think to capture the infinite within the confines of our limited understanding. If we wish to understand God truly, we must be as wide as the heavens in our mental grasp, as deep as the sea in our feelings and as unconfined as the starry universe in our outlook.

God cannot be partial. It would be unjust of Him to make one race savage, the other civilized. The school-teacher was once a pupil himself. He had to develop into a teacher. In the same way a civilized race has developed from its initial savage

state. The once savage individual, who painted his body and tattooed his skin, has passed through several lives before becoming the civilized man of our own day. What other explanation can we give for the daily efforts with which, step by step, we make our way forwards, if all this is to bring no personal progress? What should we exert ourselves for if we did not ourselves profit by development? Just as we throw aside a worn-out garment and don a new one, so we at last leave behind our tired body and reappear with a fresh and stronger constitution to carry out our previous intents.

Whenever a child is born, it is the birth of God's own image. Whenever a boy sees the light, he is Adam, he is man. Whenever a girl is born, she is Eve, of whom it was said that she was 'the mother of all living' (*Genesis* iii. 20). The wheel of creation cannot cease turning, for the Creator himself would first have to cease. Let us open our eyes and see our beings as nothing else but Adam, the man, and Eve, the mother of all living things. Let us tear off the shell of ignorance and realize that the being we have built up in millions of years is the embodied striving and endeavour of our own heart. Let us take courage and climb higher, trusting in the one Creator of all our deeds, in the one Creator of all our works, in the one Creator of all that is noble, in the one Creator of all that is divine. Let us recognize in truth our heavenly heritage, our divine birthright and our exalted origin. For whatever comes from God is of God, and whatever is of God, is God.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A well-known Hungarian lawyer and his wife had decided to spend their three weeks' holiday on a steamboat on the Danube, stopping at whatever places took their fancy. The landscape was beautiful all along the river. After they had stayed at a few towns in Austria, they went on through Germany. They thought over events of the past and discussed with each other the interesting details of their journey. Both were of a thoughtful and sober disposition; the lawyer himself was gifted with an unusually sharp logical mind, while his wife was equally discerning and adept at expressing herself. Her feminine intuition often permitted her to put her finger on the causes of human actions, and she was thus frequently able to help her husband in his legal practice.

Once as the ship was steaming round a bend in the river, the lawyer's wife was seized by a strange restlessness. She grasped her husband's arm and implored him to stop here, as she wanted to go on land. There was, however, no landing-place to put in at, and both shores were thickly wooded; it would have been most unreasonable to anchor here. 'I must get to the shore! Not far from here is a castle that I must see. Let me go, let me go, or else I shall jump overboard. I must get there tonight!' she told her husband.

'But my dear, where shall we spend the night? And who's to carry our cases? Don't you see that it's already late? We'll go there tomorrow for sure. Please don't insist today,' the lawyer entreated her. But his wife did not cease to worry him. She seemed no longer herself, and when they tried to hold her she tore herself free. As they feared she was losing her reason, the boat was brought to anchor. As soon as she set foot on dry land, she ran off through the woods, closely followed by her husband. In a clearing they met a woodman, who told them there was no village in the neighbourhood.

'I'm going to the castle and I know my way,' the woman answered. The only person who lived thereabouts was an old peasant who kept the key of the castle. Very probably he was

the caretaker of the castle and park. In compliance with the request of this strange woman, the peasant reluctantly opened the big iron gates. She rushed in, her frightened husband at her heels. 'That's my room!' she cried. 'Look, there's my bed, and that's where they killed me!' She gave a piercing cry and fell in a swoon. She was carried to the peasant's house, where she did not come to herself till the following morning.

The peasant confirmed that about forty years before the corpse of a stabbed woman had been found in a dark cellar and had been buried in the garden.

Modern psychology is no longer content to catalogue the innumerable symptoms of psychopaths. The long-awaited descent into the depths of the human soul is the aim of the latest experiments. Pioneers are exploring the psyche and conquering corner after corner of their own souls. Their hopes are high, for the topmost summit is at last visible, even though it has still to be scaled.

Famous psychologists of the West now announce the rediscovery of an age-old truth: that man returns to our earthly sphere more than once. They declare that rebirth is the only firm basis for the theory of evolution.

Successful hypnotic experiments have enabled the veil of the present to be drawn aside and a glimpse of the past to be obtained. In one of his lectures, Dr C. Alexander of London reports on an extremely interesting experiment that he carried out. A medium was put into a deep trance and asked about her activities in the past days, weeks and months. Her answers were in exact conformity with the secret observations that had been made by members of the Research Institute. The patient was then asked about her activities in the last few years. The answers came in logical succession, being pursued back to the days of her childhood. The further she went back into the past, the more her voice changed, and finally it was the voice of a six-year-old child. 'What do you remember in this period of your life?' the doctor asked. Out of this state of profound hypnosis the words came unusually slowly, for the medium was probing deeper and deeper into her subconscious. She described her games, her companions and the jokes and gaiety of those days. 'Tell me everything you can remember till the time of your birth,' the

doctor bade her gently. Down to her second year the medium gave intelligible replies, but from that point onwards she was unable to speak at all. Minutes elapsed, till finally, in its deep trance, the body of the medium began to perform the movements of a new-born child. 'Where were you,' pursued the doctor, 'before your birth?' There was no answer. Silence ensued for a full twenty minutes. The pulse sank to less than 30. The stillness was frightening. Some of the Research Committee feared that the respiration, which now came only in short gasps, would fail completely, and proposed that the experiment should be broken off. Just as the doctor in charge was preparing to awaken the medium, a strange thing happened. The body gave signs of life and began to speak in foreign accents which most of those present were at a loss to understand. Some of them knew enough, however, to recognize the language as Hindustani. The medium was recounting events from her own life in days of antiquity. Shortly afterwards the trance was broken, but it was some hours before the medium fully regained her consciousness. Once she was awake, she could remember nothing of what she had related to the company of doctors, priests, psychologists and philologists who were in attendance.

The closing words of the Old Testament presuppose the reincarnation of Elijah and Elisha: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord' (*Malachi* iv. 5). And so John (Elijah) was sent 'before the coming of the day of the Lord', born a little earlier in order to be able to announce the birth of Christ. An angel appeared to his father Zacharias and told him that his son John, who was soon to be born, was no other than Elias (i.e. Elijah).

'But the angel said unto him: Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John . . . And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him (i.e. before Christ) in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' (*Luke* i. 13 ff.) Twice Jesus identified John the Baptist unequivocally as Elias: 'But I say unto you,

That Elias is come already, and they knew him not Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.' (*Matthew* xvii. 12 f.). On another occasion Christ said: 'For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.' (*Matthew* xi. 13 f.)

When John the Baptist denied that he was Elias (*John* i. 21), he meant that in the humble guise of John he had ceased to be Elijah, the great *guru*. In his earlier life he had given his divine cloak and his spiritual power to his pupil Elisha. 'And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.' (*Second Book of Kings* ii. 9 ff.)

(Extract from Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi*)

'The soul is older than the body. Souls are born again and again into this life.'

(Plato)

'All things have a soul; everything in the organic world is wandering soul, obeying the eternal will and law.'

(Pythagoras)

'After death the reasoning soul, freed from the fetters of the flesh, surrounds itself with an ethereal envelope and passes into the kingdom of the dead, where it remains till it is sent back into another human or animal body. After successive purifications, when it has reached the highest stage, it is taken up by the gods and thus returns to the eternal sources whence it originated.'

(Pythagoras)

6. The light shines from East to West; the sun rises from the darkness and sinks into the darkness. So is it with man to all eternity.

7. When it emerges from the darkness, it has lived before, and when it sets again, it is in order to rest a while and then to live again.

8. So you must pass through many transformations in order to become perfect, as it is written in the Book of Job: 'I am a wanderer and go from one place to another, from one house to another, till I come to the city and the house that are eternal.'

(Words of Christ to Nicodemus)

(Translated from: *Das Evangelium des vollkommenen Lebens*, Humata Verlag Harold S. Blume, Berne.)

'There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.' (Genesis vi. 4)

'The lord of the universe, who loved the pious man . . . and wished to save him from the flood of destruction caused by the wickedness of the times, spoke to him thus and told him what he must do: O thou subduer of thine enemies, within seven days the three worlds shall sink in an ocean of ruin; but in the midst of the death-bringing waves a boat sent by me for thy use shall appear before thee. And thou shalt take all healing herbs and all kinds of seeds and wild animals and with them shalt thou enter the spacious ark and sail in it in safety from the waves, on an infinite lightless ocean that will be illuminated only by the emanations of thy holy companions. And when a storm-wind shakes the ship, I will be near thee and will guide the boat with thee and thy fellows. And I will remain on the ocean, O thou leader of all men! Then thou shalt know my true greatness and shalt call me by my rightful name: God the Almighty; and my grace shall answer all thy questions and fully instruct thy spirit.' (Puras)

The mythology of all ancient races tells of the Flood and the rescue of a few virtuous men with the various species of animals. Compare the story of Noah and the ark. (Genesis vi. 7 ff.)

The Fourteenth Incarnation of Chenrezi¹

One of the few living eyewitnesses of the event was the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Dzaza Künsangtse. One

¹ Heinrich Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, translated by Richard Graves, London, Hart-Davis, 1953.

evening he told me the story of this mysterious event. Some time before his death in 1933 the thirteenth Dalai Lama had given intimations regarding the manner of his rebirth. After his death, the body sat in state in the Potala in traditional Buddha-posture, looking towards the south. One morning it was noticed that his head was turned to the east. The State Oracle was straightway consulted, and while in his trance the monk Oracle threw a white scarf in the direction of the rising sun. But for two years nothing more definite was indicated. Then the Regent went on a pilgrimage to a famous lake to ask for counsel. It is said that every person who looks into the water of Chö Khor Gye can see a part of the future. When the Regent, after long prayers, came to the water and looked in its mirror he had a vision of a three-storeyed monastery with golden roofs, near which stood a little Chinese peasant house with carved gables. Full of gratitude for the divine direction, he returned to Lhasa and began to make preparations for a search. The whole nation took a lively interest in the business, feeling itself an orphan with no divine patron to protect it. With us it is generally, but mistakenly, believed that each rebirth takes place at the moment of the predecessor's death. This does not accord with Buddhist doctrine, which declares that years may pass before the god once more leaves the fields of Heaven and resumes the form of a man. Search-groups set out to explore in the year 1937. Following the signs which had been vouchsafed they journeyed eastward in quest of the Holy Child. The members of these groups were monks and in each group there was one secular official. They all carried with them objects that had belonged to the thirteenth Dalai Lama.

The group to which my informant belonged journeyed under the leadership of Kyetsang Rimpoche till they reached the district of Amdo in the Chinese province of Chinghai. In this region there are many monasteries, as the great reformer of Lamaism, Tsong Kapa, was born here. The population is partly Tibetan and lives peacefully side by side with Moslems. The group found a number of boys but none of them corresponded to the specifications. They began to fear that they would fail in their mission. At last after long wanderings they encountered a three-storeyed monastery with golden roofs. With a flash of enlightenment they remembered the Regent's vision, and then their eyes fell on the cottage with carved gables. Full of excitement they

dressed themselves in the clothes of their servants. This manœuvre is customary during these searches, for persons dressed as high officials attract too much attention and find it hard to get in touch with the people. The servants, dressed in the garments of their masters, were taken to the best room, while the disguised monks went into the kitchen, where it was likely they would find the children of the house.

As soon as they entered the house, they felt sure that they would find the Holy Child in it, and they waited tensely to see what would happen. And, sure enough, a two-year-old boy came running to meet them and seized the skirts of the Lama, who wore round his neck the rosary of the thirteenth Dalai Lama. Unabashed the child cried 'Sera Lama, Sera Lama!' It was already a matter for wonder that the infant recognised a Lama in the garb of a servant and that he said that he came from the monastery of Sera—which was the case. Then the boy grasped the rosary and tugged at it till the Lama gave it to him; thereupon he hung it round his own neck. The noble searchers found it hard not to throw themselves on the ground before the child, as they had no longer any doubt. They had found the Incarnation. But they had to proceed in the prescribed manner.

They bade farewell to the peasant family, and again returned a few days later—this time not disguised. They first negotiated with the parents, who had already given one of their sons as an Incarnation to the Church, and then the little boy was awakened from his sleep and the four delegates withdrew with him to the altar-room. Here the child was subjected to the prescribed examination. He was first shown four different rosaries, one of which—the most worn—had belonged to the thirteenth Dalai Lama. The boy, who was quite unconstrained and not the least bit shy, chose the right one without hesitation and danced round the room with it. He also selected out of several drums one which the last Incarnation had used to call his servants. Then he took an old walking-stick, which had also belonged to him, not deigning to bestow a glance on one which had a handle of ivory and silver. When they examined his body they found all the marks which an Incarnation of Chenrezi ought to bear: large, outstanding ears, and moles on the trunk which are supposed to be traces of the four-armed god's second pair of arms.

The delegates were now sure that they had found what they

sought. They telegraphed in a secret code via China and India a message to be conveyed to Lhasa, and immediately received instructions to observe the utmost secrecy, to avoid intrigues which might imperil the success of their mission. The four envoys took a solemn oath of silence before a *thanka* on which a likeness of Chenrezi was embroidered, and then went off to inspect other boys as a blind. One must remember that the search was being conducted on Chinese territory, which made caution essential. It would have been fatal to betray the fact that the real Dalai Lama had been discovered, for the Chinese could then have insisted on sending an escort of troops with him to Lhasa. The delegates accordingly asked the Governor of the province, a certain Ma Pufang, for permission to take the boy to Lhasa, where the Dalai Lama would be identified out of a number of candidates. Ma Pufang asked 100,000 Chinese dollars for the surrender of the child and this sum was at once paid over. This was a mistake, as the Chinese now perceived what importance the Tibetans attached to the child. They then asked for another 300,000 dollars. The delegates, conscious of their previous mistake, only gave a part of this sum which they borrowed from local Mohammedan merchants, promising to pay the balance when they came to Lhasa to the merchants who accompanied the caravan. The Governor agreed to this arrangement.

In the late summer of 1939 the four delegates, together with their servants, the merchants, the Holy Child and his family, started for Lhasa. They travelled for months before reaching the Tibetan frontier. There a Cabinet Minister was waiting for them with his staff. He gave the boy a letter from the Regent containing official confirmation of his recognition. Then for the first time homage was paid to him as Dalai Lama. Even his parents, who had certainly guessed that their son must be a high Incarnation, only now learned that he was no less than the future ruler of Tibet.

From this day the little Dalai Lama distributed blessings as naturally as if he had never done anything else. He has still a clear recollection of being borne into Lhasa in his golden palanquin. He had never seen so many people. The whole town was there to greet the new Embodiment of Chenrezi who at last after so many years returned to the Potala and his orphaned people. Six years had passed since the death of the 'Previous Body' and of these

nearly two had elapsed before the god re-entered a human body. In February 1940 the enthronement of the Dalai Lama was celebrated during the Great New Year Festival, when he received new names such as 'The Holy One,' 'The Tender, Glorious One,' 'The Mighty of Speech,' 'The Excellent Understanding,' 'The Absolute Wisdom,' 'The Defender of the Faith,' 'The Ocean.'

Everyone was astonished at the unbelievable dignity of the child and the gravity with which he followed ceremonies which lasted for hours. With his predecessor's servants, who had charge of him, he was as trusting and affectionate as if he had always known them.

I was very glad to have heard this account more or less at first hand. During the lapse of time many legends had collected around these extraordinary events and I had already heard several garbled versions.

Sri Ramana Maharishi, the wise man of Arunachala, in Southern India, was visited by people of all classes. Often some of India's greatest scholars would forgather to pay homage to this holy man. Maharishi rarely spoke. He transmitted his wisdom by silence, radiating a peace which flowed tangibly from the immeasurable heights of his being. Not infrequently he was to be seen in the *samadi* trance, the state of bliss, while his faithful followers sat in the hall and each tried in his modest way to advance along the path of meditation. Each one of them was aware that one of the three forms of grace attainable in this life had been granted to them in the presence of this enlightened soul, whose mere proximity gave them the faith and certitude that man's highest aim can really be attained. Among the crowds of visitors was a boy of eight and a half years. For a long time this boy sat without speaking in front of the saint. Towards evening Maharishi set off on his daily walk up the hill. The boy then turned to the meeting and spoke in very simple and easily understandable words about the principles of the Yoga and Vedanta philosophy, quoting the teachings of the great Indian sages of the past. The listeners were absorbed and moved by the great knowledge the boy showed. When Maharishi returned, all conversation died down. But the boy did not take his eyes off his master for minutes, and tears of ecstasy flowed down

his small, innocent face. Soon afterwards the boy rose and went away. One or two of the learned listeners then approached the wise man and asked him to explain the strange happening to them. And he answered them: 'The experiences of his last life are powerful in him.'

MEMORIES OF MY YOUTH

I was often witness of strange scenes that took place in my father's waiting room. Visitors and friends constantly came and went here, quite apart from the stream of patients. A man who held a high position in the law courts one day took his leave and set out on his travels as a wandering monk. He was well versed in the age-old philosophic systems, he knew the Vedanta, the Upanishads, the Gita and the epics. Nor was he untutored in the Western philosophies, which he designated as a circle partly drawn but as yet awaiting completion. Sometimes there was a discussion, which usually developed into a debate and culminated, under skilful guidance, in one of the holy scriptures, whether it was the Koran of the Mohammedans, the Dhammapada of the Buddhists, the Christian Bible or the Hindu Vedas.

It was there that my conservative Christian ideas suffered their first shock, when I realized that the Vedas accepted all religious creeds, regarding them as the manifold revelations of faith which the individual needs for his development. Buddhism was included in Hinduism (the Vedanta) and was never an independent religion. It was above all a reformation of the Hindu way of life; and the high-minded Buddha never intended to found a religion.—I was most astonished when I learnt that the symbolic legend of Adam and Eve that appears in the Old Testament of the Jews was set down long before in the Vedas, where the names are Adima and Heva.

Let the world have as many religions as it needs! They can never do harm, only good. This liberal attitude of the Hindus puts an end to all quarrels between the various faiths.

'What do you see on that tree, O Arjuna?' Krishna once asked. 'I see a tree, O master, laden with black berries,' Arjuna answered. 'Not a tree laden with black berries, O Arjuna, but a tree laden with Sri Krishnas,' said his lord.

And so I came to understand that one and the same God covers the tree of life, sheltering all men, whether Mohammedans, Jews, Christians or Hindus.

From the picture gallery of my memory faces rise, recalling

impressions which were printed deep on my mind in the days of my childhood. One of them belongs to a story-teller, another to a singer, yet another to a skilful debater, and among many others I still see the face of a quiet man with whom my father shared many a solitary hour.

The story-teller adorned his tales with entertaining fables from the Panchatantra, which is the oldest existent collection of animal stories. 'Babu,' he called to me, 'I still have a few tales for you today. But first finish your homework.' I hurried to complete my boring arithmetic and English grammar exercises and was soon at the feet of this strange man, whose object it was to improve mankind. Hardly anybody took him seriously, for he expounded his purpose all too often. I cared little about this, but opened my heart all the wider to the treasures of my age-old motherland. Some of his stories were taken from the epics. 'Do you know how our grey squirrel got his white stripes?' he asked.

'When Rama built his bridge between Bharata and Ravana's island (India and Ceylon) so as to lead over his army and to destroy the giant Ravana, he was helped by all the animals of the forest. Hanuman, the great king of the apes, busied himself with all his people bringing up large rocks and uprooted trees. Even the small animals came to help Rama, and one of them was a little grey squirrel that brought his tiny portion of sand to help fill up the ocean. Rama, the lord, was very pleased at this and stroked the squirrel's back, where his fingers left three white stripes. Since then all the squirrels in the land of Bharata have borne the blessed mark of Rama.

'Whenever an Indian sees a squirrel, he thinks of Rama, the lord, and in thinking of Rama he thinks of God himself, whom Rama embodied, and so he feels himself blessed.'

Another story of which I was very fond was about a faithful parrot. A hungry hunter once aimed his poisoned arrow at a deer, but missed it and hit the trunk of a tall tree. The deadly poison ran into the roots; the tree soon withered and died. All the insects and birds that had lived in the tree now left it. Only one of them did not leave it, and this was a virtuous parrot. Determined to end his life in the company of his old friend, the tree, he remained behind. All good deeds and virtues come to the ears of Indra, the king of the gods, and thus the virtues of

this bird soon found their way into the heavens. When the god looked down on to the earth, he was astonished by the parrot's loyalty. In the guise of a hermit he therefore appeared to the bird to test the honesty of its motives and asked: 'Why, O bird, have you not chosen some other tree to be your home? Many a one of them is young and slender. Others are old and mighty and harbour tree-gods also. Choose from the many trees in this lovely forest.'

'O Indra, my frugal life and my old age vouchsafe me knowledge of many things,' the bird said. 'Welcome, king of gods! Why do you seek to lure me away from one who protected me at my birth and in my sickness and old age? It was under these venerable boughs that I came to know the law of life, and the secret beyond death. Should I, O king, leave the one who most loved me? I choose rather to remain here till the end of my days.'

Delighted by the fidelity and knowledge of the virtuous parrot, Indra changed back into his heavenly form, bright as the midday sun; he praised the bird for its great deserts and said: 'Wish for some grace, whatever is nearest your heart.'

'Bring my faithful friend back to life, O king!' the bird entreated him.

Indra sprinkled a few drops of the water of life on the roots: soon the tree revived and raised its branches in adoration to Indra.

MY LITTLE LAMP

I sit in silent amazement and wonder at the melodies my soul doth sing.

Thou hast lit the tiny flicker of my heart with
Thine immortal love, O my Master, and now I shall
Endeavour to keep it ever burning.

Thou dost feed this lamp with the oil of understanding.
My tongue will henceforth be still to permit mine ears to
Listen within to Thine eternal wisdom.

The eternal flicker of this lamp doth glow and shine.
Sunk in the depths of silence, what matters else
But to know that I AM?

THOUGHTS ON SELF-DEVELOPMENT

The great rift in our education is due to the separation of parents, teachers and priests. Only when these co-operate can our children receive the education they need. Home, school and church must be a single unity in the child's mind, never three separate entities. In olden times children in India were educated by their *gurus* or spiritual teachers, who instructed them equally in the physical, intellectual and spiritual domains. An education in which any one of these three components is missing is only a partial education. And a partial education is no education at all.

Through a lack of self-control many disagreeable habits are today sanctioned. Smoking in trams, trains, aeroplanes, cinemas and offices is a sign of our disregard for and thoughtlessness towards our fellow-men. Quite apart from the increase in disease due to this habit, its result is not merely an individual, but a national decay. An undermined health is a far more powerful enemy than any political antagonist.

The essence of our Christian religion—'Love thy neighbour as thyself'—has today been degraded to mere empty words. Yet we do not want to be chatterers, but earnest workers with a healthy grasp of human nature, with grit and backbone, in order to erect the mighty edifice of mutual understanding through which we can learn to make manifest our true nature: virtue, strength, wisdom and peace.

Our much lauded civilization has reached imposing heights. What more can it offer us than these clean, technically perfect cities, speedy means of transport, hygiene and healthy food? Yet the aim of civilization ought not to be bodily comfort, but culture. Civilization promotes the material well-being of man, but it should really encourage him to learn the simple and pure accents of the heart and, when he speaks, to speak its cultured language.



Civilization is the achievement of materialistic man. Culture is the achievement of spiritual man. Civilization and culture must consequently be the material and spiritual expressions of the human being. A fully developed man is therefore one who is both civilized and cultured.

In the great playground of life we develop our bodies and our souls. Religion is the assimilation of healthy ideas, which strengthen the soul and help it to manifest the highest, noblest, loftiest and divinest elements of its nature.

The world was never lost, and never will be. Even the most devastating catastrophes leave behind a positive teaching for humanity, which can profit thereby and develop as a result.

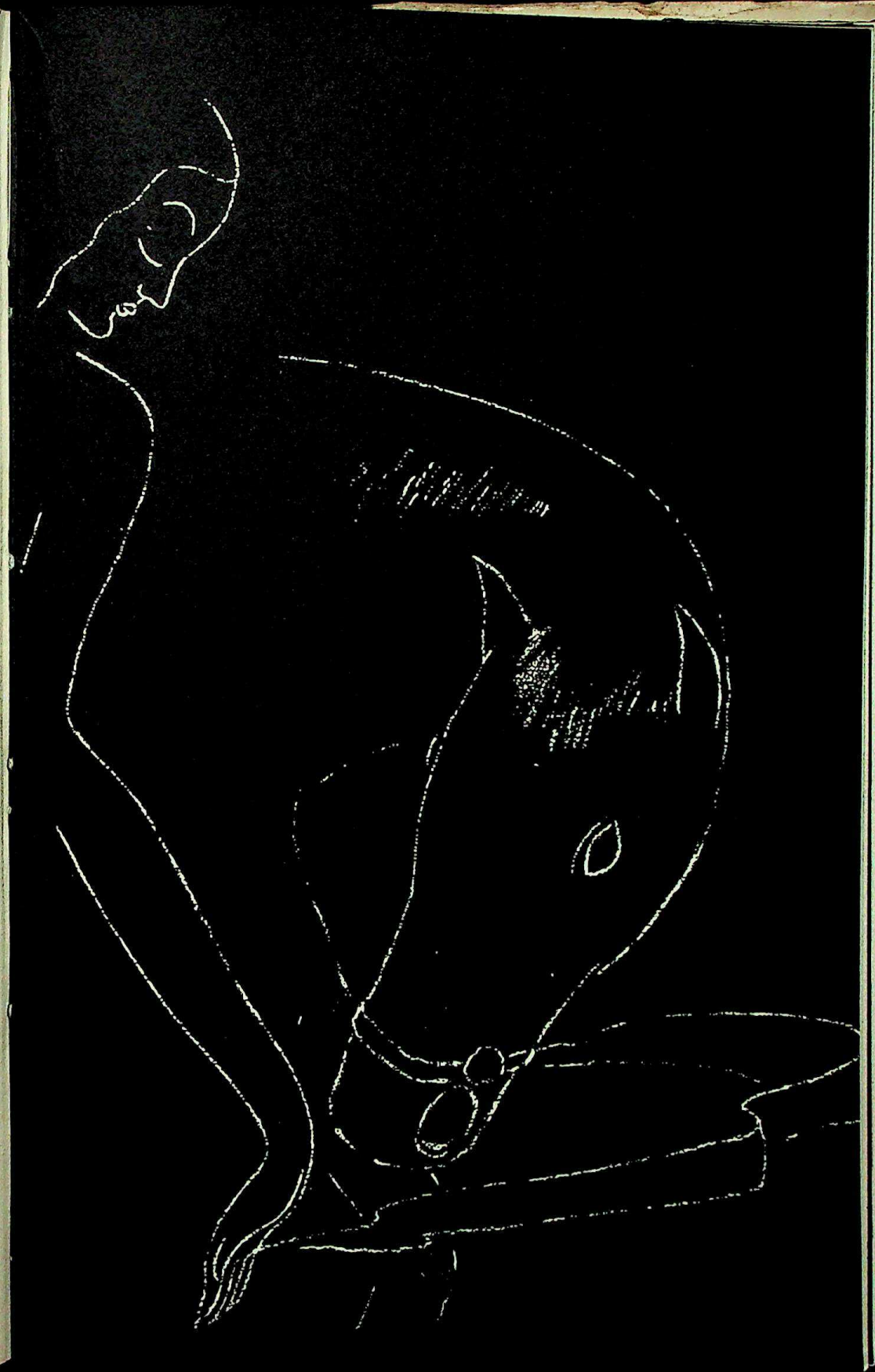
And man does learn! He longs for the good—which is why he is drawn to God. Will man be able to achieve divinity? If the desire is there, be sure that it will not die unfulfilled.

Man is an almighty being. His experience will one day waken the sleeping giant in him, so that he rises and proves his own greatness and strength. Do the accomplishments of man not testify to his stature and his unbounded nature? Will he not always go forward to new achievements? Has he already written all the pages of the book of life? As illimitable as are the heavens—so illimitable are the potentialities of man.

LEGENDS OF BUDDHA

More than two thousand years ago, in a small kingdom in the north of the beautiful country of Bharata, a child of royal parentage was born. Seven days later his mother died. His stars foretold strange events that spread apprehension abroad in the kingdom. He would either be a mighty emperor or, meeting the grim and inexorable visage of life, would become an ascetic. The prophecy of the brahmans contained the forecast that the child would turn away from life for four reasons: age, sickness, death and a wandering hermit. The anxious king consulted his wise men and decided to keep his son far from the sight of all these evil omens, within the spacious walls of his palaces. Nurtured under the tender guardianship of the king, the young prince Siddharta grew up. In the king's three well-guarded palaces all the amenities of life were available to him, and the prince's eyes saw no aged, no sick, no dying and no hermits. Nor did any hint of the fate of all mortals come to his ears.—Time passed. The years of childhood were at last over, and the prince became a young man of marriageable age. The king cherished high hopes that the holy bonds of wedlock would keep the prince faithful to his royal duties, and that he would one day become an emperor. In order to accomplish his secret wish and to find a fitting mate for the prince, the king gave his son a large casket full of magnificent jewels, so that he could present them to the beautiful princesses of the land. But the last costly jewel was given away, the last friendly glance cast on him by the recipient—and still love had not wakened in the prince's heart. At last, however, it arrived: she was slender as a doe, had large lotus eyes and seemed like a goddess from heaven, whose beauty is more than mortal. She looked up shyly and asked for her share. There were no jewels left except the one the prince himself was wearing. He at once drew his own precious ring from his finger and placed it in the hands that sought his. Their eyes now met, and in each of them love for the other was born.

In those olden days the custom was that a suitor, to win his



bride honourably, must excel all his rivals in archery, in the other martial arts and in intellectual prowess. The great day arrived when hundreds of kings and princes met to measure their strength. Each of them gave of his best, but none of them could compare with Prince Siddharta, who won his bride Yashodhara on the strength of his outstanding deeds.—United now in love, they lived happily amid the innumerable pleasures the palace offered them. The best musicians, singers and dancers in the land of Bharata were there, enriching the life of the castle with their gaiety and merriment, so that the place truly resembled the heavenly court of Indra. Sorrow was unknown, sickness was banished, there were no aged people to be seen, and hermits were not allowed near. But the king had never forgotten the grave words of his wise brahmans and had given orders that the prince should never encounter any of these four evil influences. He himself was ever busy inventing fresh pleasures.

The creator of all things and the gods of the heavens had chosen the prince long before his birth for a great mission on earth, for he was in reality one of them. He was to kindle a new light on the path of the peoples of the earth and to show them the way out of bondage and suffering. The heavenly powers now saw that the time had come for the prince to arise and fulfil his divine mission. Their wish traversed the universe and the three worlds in an instant, and soon it entered the heart of the prince. All at once the fire of the senses ceased to burn in him. A revulsion against the fleeting pleasures of the flesh swept over him, now that he saw that life could not offer him more than he already had. Whatever joys he sought, they soon faded away and set him thinking about the meaning of life. He wanted to see and know more of life. He called his charioteer Channa and ordered him to drive him into his city, so that he could view it with his own eyes.

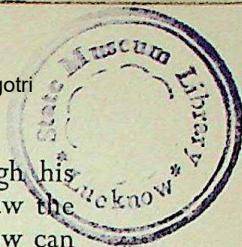
Orders were given to clean the city and to prepare it for the prince so that it should appear pleasant and joyful. The king's command was that no aged or sick people and no dead should be seen in the streets, and no hermit should be allowed to walk there. Yet great as was the care taken to remove these four signs, a god nevertheless appeared to the prince in the form of a very old man. He walked bowed under the weight of his years and dragged his ailing limbs slowly along, gasping for breath

at each pace. The prince stopped his horses and observed the strange creature moving before him. Never had his eyes seen the like of it before. Never had he known that there was such a thing as age. When he learned that this was the sad lot of all mortals, he was filled with pity and overwhelmed by the spectacle before him. He heard that the old man was living his last days on earth and would soon have to depart this life. The sight made the prince certain that he had been misled in his judgement of human fate. He returned downcast to his palace and gave himself over to contemplation of the profound problem of life and death.

Time went by. The transience of life drove him to despair. He wanted to find some way out of the ineluctable destiny of man. He visited the city a second time. There his eye fell on a sick man. Troubled, he asked Channa whether pain was also part of man's lot. Once he saw a pale, lifeless, motionless body, all prepared to be carried away and burnt. His faith in this world was sadly shaken.

One day he chanced upon yet another strange sight. As he drove in his chariot among his subjects, he saw a man in a yellow robe whose gaze was serene and peaceful. This too was a divine being who had taken on the guise of an ascetic in order to turn the prince's mind away from worldly things. The prince alighted from his golden carriage, approached the hermit and asked who he was.

'Know, O Prince: I am one who has given up the vain pursuit of pleasure and has found peace. In this world nothing is permanent, all things must pass away, however dear they may be,' answered the beggar monk, who did not slacken his pace but soon vanished in the crowd. Moved by the hermit's words, the prince could find no sleep that night. He was already planning to give up the world and to take the path of eternal peace the yogi had spoken of. When the king heard of all these happenings, he became very grave and was seized by fear. He saw his plan of making an emperor out of Prince Siddharta doomed to failure; and so he now tried to divert his troubled son from his purpose by speaking of the dangers of a life of wandering. But nothing could change Prince Siddharta's mind, for it was now filled with the thoughts of the hermit he had seen. The pleasures of the palace could no longer hold him,



family bonds could no longer restrain his soul. Although his beautiful wife Yashodhara had given birth to a son, he saw the shadow of death fall on the figures of his loved ones. 'How can one find lasting happiness in a changing world?' he thought. 'How can the deceptive seeming of this world be any source of comfort? How can Yashodhara—or my son Rahula—ever escape the fate of mortals?'

One night, when the palace slept, he felt that his hour had come to rise and go. He cast a last glance at the sleeping babe and its mother and left the chamber. The heavenly hosts were foregathered to see the prince leave. Channa, the charioteer, was ordered in the depths of night to fetch the horse Kantaka from its stable. Sorrowfully he obeyed his lord. In vain he pleaded with the prince to give up his journey, for nothing could weaken his resolve. Four winged deities bore the horse out of the gates of the castle, so that no noise could awaken the guards. Mounted on his trusty steed for the last time, the prince rode to the edge of the city, which he reached before daybreak. He gave his horse back to Channa and asked him to return to the palace and to comfort the king, telling him that his son was taking a path that led beyond birth and death, that he was seeking the salvation of all mankind. The horse lovingly licked the prince's hand, while Channa flung himself down before his lord and then went sadly away.

The prince now turned his back on the world for ever and sought to escape from its vanity, its pleasures and pains. The immeasurable forest received him, one resolved to find a realm mightier than any earthly kingdom. Scarcely had he entered nature's world when a *deva*, a heavenly guardian, appeared in the form of a hunter clad in tattered clothes. Moved by compassion, the prince gave him his jewelled apparel and took the hunter's rags in return. Soon afterwards he met another celestial being disguised as a barber who offered to shave his head. Finding this appropriate to the life of a hermit, the prince consented.

The wanderings of Siddharta brought him to many hermitages and many holy men. Each one taught some system by which mankind might be led out of darkness, gloom and death into a heavenly existence, yet none could point him the way to the cessation of joy and sorrow, of birth and death. Many pitied

the prince and spoke of the hardships of an ascetic life void of all creature comforts. Others tried to dissuade him from his purpose and advised him to return to the life allotted to human beings, with its wealth of pleasures and consolations. 'Where there is pleasure, there is also pain,' thought the prince, 'for pleasure passes, leaving pain behind.' He pondered on the evanescent pleasures of palace life and recalled the misery he had met with on his visit to the town. The memory of his encounter with age, sickness, death and the hermit rose vividly before him. 'Whatever is born must die,' reflected the prince, 'and nothing on this earth can escape death.' Determined all the more to fathom the mystery of life and death, the prince swore not to rise from his seat till he had found the answer. He ate nothing but a little corn that scarcely sufficed to sustain the life in his body. His privations left their mark on him, and all who saw him were filled with awe and fear. Meanwhile many envoys from his father's kingdom appeared on the scene. But they tried in vain to persuade the prince to retract from his vow. 'Should enlightenment not come,' he said, 'and should I perish in my endeavour, carry me to my father's house and bury my bones there.' Now days and nights went by, but no enlightenment came. The season changed from gay summer to drear winter, but no enlightenment came. His frame grew weak and pale as of one about to die, but his cruel self-denial still bore no fruit. And finally he accepted food and drink again from the simple people of the village.

It is said that Sujata, the pious daughter of a village chief, who had herself observed all these events, was instructed by an angel in a dream to visit the *bodhisatva* and to offer him food. She took the milk of a thousand cows to feed five hundred other cows, and with the milk of the latter she fed two hundred and fifty cows, and so forth till she had the milk of only fifteen cows, and with this milk she prepared a dish of milk and rice of the greatest purity. When the prince came to the village to ask for food, she offered him this bowl as a sacramental repast, and he accepted it.

The *bodhisatva*, who was destined to become Buddha, now approached the Tree of Wisdom, where the buddhas of olden times had taken their seat, and sat down beneath it. The birds of the air and the wild beasts of the forest drew close to see the

Great One, and living creatures of all kinds encircled their serene visitor, each one eager to witness the wonder of Buddhahood.

The heavens opened, and countless *devas* and celestial beings sang praises, wishing the prince success. Even the gods descended to be present at the miraculous birth and to see the one who was resolved to conquer the three worlds and to become ruler over a kingdom that should be mightier than that of mortals. The *bodhisatva* shone as brightly as ten thousand suns. His rays penetrated the three worlds: hell, earth and heaven.

Mara, the Evil One, was alarmed, and dazzled by the sudden rays of light that poured into his realm of darkness from the Tree of Wisdom. He realized at once the intent of the *bodhisatva*, who was resolved to achieve immortality and thus to free all those who languished in his own evil power. Calling together his hordes of phantoms, goblins and bloodthirsty demons, Mara marched towards the Tree of Wisdom to destroy the newcomer. In the meantime the Blessed One had reached the tree and seated himself beneath it, his countenance turned to the East, determined not to move till he had attained complete enlightenment. Mara, whose wickedness knew no bounds, appeared before the *bodhisatva* disguised as a messenger from Kapilavastu, the prince's native town, and urged him to return and render help, for the tyrant Devadatta had seized the kingdom.

The prince, who sensed the true reason of the happenings in his father's realm, and knew that weakness was the cause of all human suffering, did not waver in his intention of attaining Buddhahood.

Since his first ruse had failed, Mara now sent his three seductive daughters to tempt the prince with their beauty, their love, their dancing and singing. The Blessed One, however, remembered his life in the palace in the midst of ephemeral joys and pleasures and was aware that all earthly glamour fades. He spoke therefore to the beautiful daughters of Mara, who were like the heavenly dancers of the god Indra, and said: 'Of all things that have any duration on earth, pleasures are the shortest-lived, my fair ones. Shall I not rather strive for what lies beyond all transience?' Shamed and chastened by their failure, they now left the prince, saying: 'Reach your goal, O Great One, and liberate all by liberating yourself.'

Mara's chagrin was complete. He realized that any further attempt to persuade the prince to go back was doomed to failure. His last scheme was therefore to attack and destroy him. With this goal in mind he gathered the immense and frightful hordes of hell, which were so terrible to behold that all the gods and angels fled in horror. From all sides the demons rained their spears, clubs and arrows upon the prince, yet he sat as motionless as the Himalayas. And like autumn leaves blown by the wind, the bands of ghouls and monsters were dispersed, and their weapons fell like flowers at the feet of Siddharta.

When all his temptations had failed, Mara decided to hurl his discus, that never missed its mark and was known and feared in the three worlds. Had he hurled it at Mount Meru, the mountain would have crumbled to dust; had he hurled it into the ocean, the waters would have boiled away; had he hurled it into the heavens, the rain would have been scorched and darkness would have fallen upon the earth. Yet even this fearful weapon could do no more than approach the head of the *bodhisatva*, circle round his seated figure three times, and fall in awe and reverence at his feet, surrendering all its destructive powers.

Now that Mara had exhausted his resources, he angrily commanded the prince to go, for this tree belonged to him. 'What I have earned in countless births is mine by merit, O lord of darkness. How can it be yours, who never strove for it?' asked the prince.—'There is no one who has greater merit than I,' Mara replied wrathfully, and all his hordes cried out in confirmation of his words. 'I call to witness,' said the prince, 'one who has watched over me and seen me enter and leave the portals of this world through many births.' And he reached down to touch the earth. At this touch of truth the earth trembled seven times, and the great earth-goddess appeared in all her beauty, strength and splendour, seated on her throne. 'I bear witness thereto!' were her words, and her voice shook the four corners of the sky. The air was motionless and the sun ceased shining as these words vibrated through the universe and swept away all the hosts of hell. Mara now sank at the feet of the Blessed One and implored his forgiveness. Never before had he suffered defeat and humiliation at the hands of a human. What troubled him most was the thought that innumerable

beings would now be liberated and henceforward would bear him no further allegiance.

Yet Mara was wholly discomfited. Never again would he exert any power over the prince. Never again could the Blessed One be deluded by the powers of the flesh. Before the virgin hours of the dawn approached, the prince had won his greatest victory. There was nothing in the three worlds that could vanquish him. Motionless as the Himalayas he sat beneath the Tree of Wisdom and conquered space, since his spirit became one with the universe. Just as the raindrop, flowing into the sea, itself becomes the sea, so his spirit entered the ocean of eternity to become itself the eternal.

In a supreme hour he recognized the origin of the whole creation, how worlds with myriads of suns and moons were born, and he perceived their ultimate dissolution. He realized the cause of birth and death, he saw the reason for suffering, pain and extinction, he beheld the path that led to the destruction of death. Before the sun rose he became the Buddha, the Enlightened One. Liberated from the prison of his body, jubilant and overjoyed at his freedom, he broke into a song that resounded from the nether worlds to the highest places of heaven:

‘Ah, thou builder of this mortal frame,
Through countless ages I have sought thee
And have found thee at last, hidden within
This casket as its one last secret.
Never again shalt thou lure me
To enter this cage of nothingness.
Thy beams have I shattered
And thy corner-stone have I destroyed,
And no desire can anchor me in thy port again.’

Days, nights and weeks elapsed, and still the Blessed One remained in this blissful state, oblivious of the world, till at last he saw the great purpose of his life unfold before him, like a bud that opens and sheds its rich fragrance on the air. He thought over the past, the aged, the suffering, the dying, the hermit who had renounced the world and sought immortality,

and how all this had led him to conquer a heavenly kingdom in order to make a gift of it to suffering mankind.

His heart was filled with compassion at the thought of so much misery, and he resolved to preach the path that leads out of the unrealities of this world, out of suffering and out of the eternal succession of birth and death.

In the city of Benares lived five hermits with whom he had practised penance. Reflecting on their inability to help him at that time, he now decided to teach them the law. Seeing the Buddha approaching, they said to each other: 'Surely he has failed to reap the reward of his penance, and he now returns to seek help from us. Let us offer him a seat, since he is of royal blood, but by no means rise to greet him.' This thought was perceived by the Blessed One, who saw their weakness and their pride. The loving kindness that emanated from him like seven rays of purest light now reached and overwhelmed them, and just as a hurricane uproots trees, so the power of his love uprooted the vanity of the hermits. Rising, they greeted the Blessed One with reverence and devotion, and honoured him as befits a Buddha. When they learned what he had become, they sat at his feet and prayed to be admitted to the path that led from delusion into light. 'Of all things that man must avoid,' said the Blessed One, 'the greatest are vain desires and mortification of the flesh.' The hermits perceived the light of his words and entered upon the path.

Buddha now arose and saw that the time was come to turn his steps towards his native town and to visit his aged father, King Siddhodhana, his wife Yashodhara, his son Rahula and the humble citizens of Kapilavastu. Receiving news of the coming of her husband, Yashodhara arose to meet him with a joyful heart. Since he had left the palace she had lived not like a princess but like an anchorite, eating little and dressing in sackcloth. With tears of joy she now hurried to meet her lord, and kneeling before him she tenderly kissed his feet. The king sought to restrain her, saying: 'Not even a king dare touch the feet of a Buddha. Rise, my child, what is this you are doing?' But the Blessed One suffered this act of piety, saying: 'She has sought to serve me through many a birth, and by practising strict self-denial she has at last become my companion. Do not restrain her, then, from what she does.' As the sun disperses

LEGENDS OF BUDDHA

the darkness of night, so the presence of the Blessed One brought light and comfort to all. As the fragrance of flowers rejoices the heart, so the words of the Blessed One rejoiced all present. As water cools the lips of those who thirst, so the words of the Blessed One soothed the suffering of the multitude. The king, Yashodhara, Rahula and all who heard his words accepted his teachings.

The hearts of the people were full of rejoicing when they saw that their prince had become a Buddha. Noon was past when the Blessed One, taking his begging bowl, walked to the door to beg for food from the poor and the humble. The king was offended at this and asked Buddha to accompany him to the palace, where food and drink would be served in regal fashion. But Buddha said: 'It is the custom of my kind to receive food thus.' By this he meant that a Buddha is no longer bound by habits or social rules, but is free to accept food from whomsoever he wishes, from the rich or the poor, the wise or the ignorant.

One day the Blessed One visited a neighbouring village. On the way to this village he had to pass through a dense forest. The villagers entreated Buddha not to go through it, for a fierce demon lived in the forest and killed everybody he could lay hands on. 'My path leads through this forest, and I must go,' said Buddha. 'No evil can betide him whose heart harbours no fear.' No sooner had he entered the forest than he heard a wild cry. Wondering where this cry had come from, he walked in the direction of the sound. His surprise was great when he espied not a demon but a hermit who, standing on one leg with his right arm raised, was thus practising self-chastisement. 'Why do you cry so?' asked Buddha. 'Can you not see that this thorny fruit that I press in my hand pierces my fingers and causes me excruciating pain?'—'Drop the fruit, and your pain will cease,' answered Buddha. Astonished at these words, the hermit obeyed, dropped the thorny fruit and suffered no further pain.

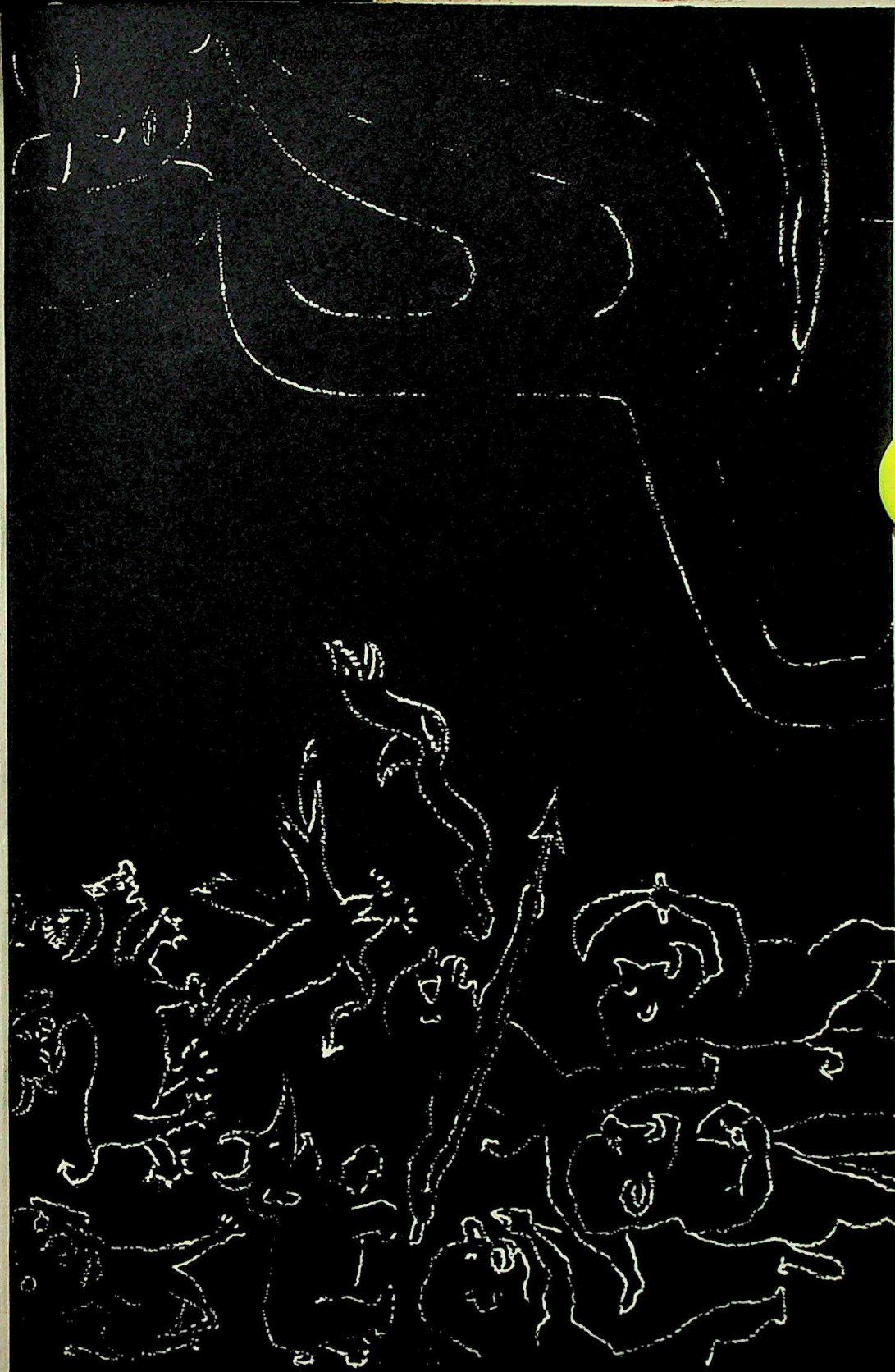
The story goes that the fierce robber Angulimala, who burned with hatred against Buddha, sought him everywhere with the intent of killing him, but found him nowhere. One day it chanced that Buddha wandered through the very forest in which the robber lived. When Angulimala set eyes on his foe, he ran after him, but in spite of his reputation for fleetness he somehow

could not come up with Buddha. Beside himself with anger, Angulimala threw his spear after his enemy. But the spear missed its mark and fell like a flower before Buddha's feet. The robber flung a second spear, but fared no better. 'Stand, O Buddha!' he now cried in his rage. 'Stand, I say, so that I may reach you.' But the Blessed One answered: 'I stand, O Angulimala. You, however, run, and therefore you cannot reach me! Stand yourself, and you will reach me in a trice.'

Once in a time of drought, when the rain had failed, the crops had withered and the cattled perished, when there was no water in the fields or wells and famine threatened, a dispute broke out over a narrow strip of water separating the territories of two princes. War seemed imminent, but Buddha sought to prevent it and asked the princes what was the cause of their quarrel. 'The water,' they replied. The Blessed One took a little water in his hand and asked: 'What is its value?' 'Very little,' said the princes. 'What is the value of a human life?' 'Very great,' they answered. 'Is it worth while to sacrifice something of great value for something of little value?' When the princes realized that they had quarrelled over something of small importance, they set their strife aside and used the water for the good of all. Overcome by esteem for Buddha, the princes and their peoples entered upon his path.

Two men got into conversation on the subject of religion, and when they found that their opinions differed, they were near to blows. A third now asked the reason for their disagreement. When he heard that they had been talking of God, he asked one of them: 'Have you seen God?'—'No, sire.'—'Has your father seen God?'—'No, sire.'—'Has your grandfather seen God?'—'No, sire,' came the answer for the third time. He then asked the other man the same questions, and received the same answers. 'Neither of you has seen God, and yet you quarrel about Him. First see God, then talk about Him,' said the stranger, who was none other than Buddha himself.

There is also a story about Buddha's greatest enemy, who nourished feelings of hate and vengeance and hatched many evil plots with the intent of killing him. The man's thoughts were therefore always centred upon Buddha, and by thinking thus



constantly of the Perfect One, he himself was purified, so that he gave up his own imperfections and finally became a saint.

While instructing believers, Buddha once ended his sermon with the words: 'It is now time.' A thief understood these words in his own way, and supposed that it was now time to steal. The harlot thought it was time to receive her guests, and the monk that it was time to meditate.

A disciple one day boasted that his supernatural power of walking on the water was the result of twenty years of exercise and penance. 'How much does it cost to be ferried over the river?' asked Buddha. 'A penny,' replied the disciple. 'And you have spent twenty years of your life in accomplishing something that would only cost you a penny!'

'Young man, whither do you turn your hurried steps at this stormy hour of night? Enter my room, rest your weary limbs, and I will lull you in the pleasures of love,' said a young courtesan to a passing ascetic. 'I will come, sweet damsel, but at a more fitting hour,' answered Upagupta, a disciple of Buddha, as he hastened forth into the black gulf of the stormswept night to help one in need. Years later, as he passed the girl's hut, he heard a voice calling for aid. Inside, Upagupta rested the head of the dying girl on his arm and, moistening her lips with water, said: 'I have come at last, O damsel, I have come at last.'

Dissatisfied with himself and with the meagre progress he had made in spiritual things, a disciple turned to revile Buddha. Full of understanding, the master replied: 'Suppose you offer a gift to somebody and it is refused—to whom does it then belong?'—'To me, of course,' said the disciple. 'I too refuse your gift, you may keep it for yourself,' said his teacher mildly.

A mother stricken with grief at the death of her only son approached Buddha with the dead child in her arms and asked his help. She expected that he would bring the boy back to life. 'Bring me, daughter, a handful of mustard seed from a house yet unvisited by bereavement,' said the Compassionate One.

The woman sought, but sought in vain; she could not find a single home which had not been visited by bereavement. Gradually sorrow left her as she came to her senses and realized that each one must face the hardships of life, and that there is no escape, not even through miracles, from the grim law of life and death.

Perceiving that all his efforts to destroy the Buddha had failed, the evil Devadatta made use of a raging elephant to slay him. He gave orders that nobody should walk in the streets, so the people thronged to their windows or on to their balconies to see whether the Blessed One would triumph or would be defeated. At the usual hour, Buddha set forth to beg for food, as was his custom. Although he had heard of his enemy's plot he did not change his habitual programme. There was not another living soul in the streets. The elephant had been given large quantities of beer to drink; and mad with intoxication, it now bore down on Buddha. Suddenly a child ran out of a nearby house into the street. The ill-tempered beast would have killed it at once had not the Blessed One checked it in time by crying: 'Do not kill the innocent child! Not it, but I was your intended prey.' At these words the animal turned in the direction of the Exalted One and rushed trumpeting towards him. Yet lo and behold: the nearer it came, the tamer it grew, till finally, overwhelmed by the loving kindness that emanated from Buddha, it knelt and touched his foot with its trunk, as though to beg his forgiveness. When the citizens, in breathless amazement, saw this wonder, they rushed out of their houses rejoicing and praising the animal. Some brought it fruits, others strewed it with flowers, till it was wellnigh buried under sweet-scented jasmine, lotus and marigolds.

One day, as Buddha walked towards his garden to rest there during the noonday heat, Yashodhara turned to her son and said: 'Hurry, my child, and ask your father for your inheritance.' The boy, not knowing who his father was, asked: 'Who, O mother, is my father?'—'Behold the lion that passes along the street; he is your father!' she replied.

When Rahula asked his father for his patrimony, and had repeated the question no less than three times, Buddha bade his

first disciple, Ananda, fulfil the boy's request. And so Rahula received the yellow robe of a monk.

Ananda felt that Yashodhara too longed to be in the company of her lord, and he therefore approached him and asked: 'May not women enter the holy order? Shall not she too follow in your footsteps?' The Blessed One answered: 'In truth, Ananda, how should sex be of importance in spiritual things? Has the Buddha ever asserted that a woman cannot enter the order?—Yet it was for you, Ananda, to ask this question.'

And so the yellow robe was granted to Yashodhara also, who thenceforward happily followed her lord as the night follows the day.

A wayfarer, wishing to know how Buddha felt in this world, enquired: 'Master, does the Noble One live happily?'

The master rejoined: 'It is as you say, young man, I live happily. Of those who live happily in this world, I too am one.'

The brahman continued: 'Bitterly cold, O master, is the winter night. The days of frost are near. The earth is churned by the hoofs of the herds. This is the couch of the dead leaves. Light is the yellow robe of the monk, sharp is the cutting wind.'

And again Buddha replied: 'It is as you say, young man. I live happily. Of those who live happily in this world, I too am one.'

On a dark, wet night the Exalted One stands in front of a cowherd's hut. The rain pours, and the wind tears at the lonely figure's robe.

Within, the cowherd catches a glimpse of a face through the window and thinks: Ha, ha! Yellow-robe! Stay outside! It's good enough for you! And then he begins to sing:

'My cattle are housed, my fire burns bright. My wife is safe, and my babe sleeps sweet. So you may rain, clouds, if you will, tonight!'

From outside comes the answer of Buddha: 'My feelings are controlled, my thoughts are collected, my heart is strong. So you may rain, clouds, if you will, tonight.'

The cowherd sings again: 'The fields are reaped, the hay is safe in the barn. The river is full, the roads are firm. So you may rain, clouds, if you will, tonight.'

And so it continues till the cowherd at last rises and, awed and contrite, becomes a disciple.

The Barber's Story

The Blessed One passed by my house,
my house—the Barber's!
I ran, but He turned and awaited me.
Awaited *me*—the Barber!
I said, 'May I speak, O Lord, with Thee?'
And He said, 'Yes!'—'Yes!' to *me*—the Barber!
And I said, 'Is Nirvana for such as I?'
And He said, 'Yes!' Even for *me*—the Barber!
And I said, 'May I follow after Thee?'
And He said, 'Oh yes!' Even *I*—the Barber!
And I said, 'May I stay, O Lord, near Thee?'
And He said, 'Thou mayest!'
Even to *me*—the poor Barber!

(From a passage in which Swami Vivekananda explains the essence of the teachings of Buddha to Sister Nivedita.)

When just over four score years had passed since his birth, death came to Buddha in the following way. A poor, low-born but good-hearted smith called Chunda had one day offered him food. This food contained pork and made Buddha gravely ill. As he was on his way to Kushingara he was overtaken by weakness and suffered great pain. All those present realized that no human body is exempt from the laws of age, sickness and death. Fearing that Chunda would blame himself for having caused this fatal illness with his gift, and worried lest others should accuse the smith of a crime, the compassionate Buddha sent Ananda, his beloved disciple, to Chunda to console him with the following words: 'Tell him that his offering will bring blessings only; for it has helped this body to dissolution and has thus caused me to enter Nirvana earlier than otherwise. Sujata too will receive her reward for the food she offered me before I attained enlightenment. Of all the gifts offered me, O Ananda, these two were the greatest.'

Even more wonderful than the hour of his birth was the hour of his death. Four times he lay down to die, and four times

he arose to give instruction to some who, in the quest for salvation and light, had come from afar. Out of love for their master the disciples did not want to permit the last of the visitors in the neighbourhood of the dying Buddha. But with his last strength, raising himself laboriously on his elbow, he said softly: 'No, no; he who was sent is ever ready.'

Like a wounded lion waiting for its last breath, this lion among men lay on his right side beneath a tree.

Thousands thronged to see the dying Buddha, among them kings and rulers, citizens and peasants, birds and beasts, gods and angels. When Ananda, overcome by grief, could no longer contain himself, he sank at the feet of his lord and wept bitterly. And the Noble One spoke: 'Weep not, Ananda, let your heart not be grieved. Know that we must part from all we hold dear in life. Whatever is born must die. That is the law of life. Long have you been with me, Ananda, you have cared for me in all my needs, and hence we are one. Strive onwards, Ananda, and win freedom from the bondage of life and death.' Raising his right hand, he then blessed all those present, assuring them that the path of salvation they had chosen would lead them all to freedom, and urging them to be patient and persevering. With his last breath he said: 'The human form must be dissolved, and nothing of it remains after death. Therefore spare no effort and work out your salvation.'

Soon afterwards the Blessed One entered Nirvana, the state of complete deliverance from birth and death. Just as the dying sun spreads the dense curtain of dark over the earth, so the living form of Buddha fell below the human horizon, only to announce in the hearts of all living beings the approach of the coming dawn of immortality.

Sundarasamudda and the Courtesan

A boy was reborn in a well-to-do family. His name was Sundarasamudda Kumar. The teachings of Buddha awoke in him a great desire to renounce all earthly things and to embrace the life of a hermit. He therefore approached the Blessed One and expressed his wish. 'Nobody is admitted to the order without the consent of his parents. Go to them and first ask for their sanction and their blessing,' said the Master. With much

effort the young man succeeded in convincing his parents of the beatitude of life in the company of Buddha and of the advantages of a monastic life free from worldly cares and woes. Soon after he had joined the order he ranked as one of the foremost monks. Not satisfied with living in the order, he now left Jetavana and went to Rajagaha, where he lived on alms and spent most of his time in meditation.

It happened one day in his home town that his parents saw his school-fellows disporting themselves at a village festival. Their hearts were filled with longing for their far-off son, and they wept bitterly. A courtesan who stood near noticed the two weeping parents and asked the woman: 'Tell me, mother, why do you weep?' When the courtesan heard the story of their son, who had renounced the world and chosen the life of a wandering monk and hermit, she said: 'What will you give me if I succeed in convincing him of the hardships and never-ending struggles and dangers of a hermit's life? If I bring him back home again, what will be my reward for my trouble?'—'Half of our fortune and our property shall be yours, O damsel. Only bring him back to us soon,' pleaded the sorrowful parents.

Collecting a large retinue, the courtesan set off with pomp and circumstance to accomplish her task.

She quickly discovered the whereabouts of the monk. In the street in which he daily begged for alms she bought a house, furnished it with everything she needed to carry out her design and waited for him to appear. Her cunning knew no bounds. One day, as expected, the monk appeared with his beggar's bowl, and the beautiful courtesan then offered him the choicest foods. Each day the unsuspecting monk made his round, and each day he received her offerings. Her next step was to pay a few boys to stir up the dust near the place where the monk ate his food, and to continue doing this even if she should beg them to stop. When the monk sat down to eat, the young ragamuffins appeared and began to kick up a fearful dust. All the woman's prayers and threats were naturally vain, and turning to the monk she said: 'Sire, the dust must inconvenience you. Step into my house and eat in peace.' Touched by this hospitality, the humble monk accepted the invitation and enjoyed the choice food she had offered him.

A few days later the woman instructed the boys to make a

din before the house and again rewarded them generously. When the monk seated himself to eat, a terrible shrieking and yelling began, which all the woman's threats failed to silence. 'Look, sire,' she said, 'the noise is intolerable. Come into my house and rest your weary limbs.' The innocent monk did as he was told and followed the girl into the upper storey of her house, where he enjoyed a delicious meal. Although he had made the vow of a monk to beg for sustenance from door to door, he now succumbed to the craving for tasty foods, and memories of his well-to-do home rose in his mind.

So it went on from day to day, while the courtesan, spinning her cunning plot a little further, began to lure the monk with the charms of love.

A proverb says that there are forty ways in which a woman can beguile a man. She pretends to be shy; she rests one foot on the other; she loosens her hair for the wind to blow through; she polishes her finger nails and looks at them admiringly; she yawns, showing teeth and tongue; she smiles with shyness; she smiles without shyness; she laughs quietly; she laughs loud, so that others may hear; she moves her hips from left to right and from right to left; she poses with one foot on the steps; she stoops low; she lets her bracelets and bangles jingle; she unveils her face and, when noticed, veils it again; she raises her robe and shows her thighs, and lowers it hastily again when observed; she shows her breast and conceals it again; she shows her navel; she shows her armpits; she raises her eyebrows; she sulks; she displays the white of her teeth; she caresses her lips; she puts out the tip of her tongue and moves it playfully from right to left; she exchanges endearments; she kisses and asks to be kissed; she gives gifts and expects gifts in return; she feeds him with fluttering lids and expects to be fed again. While she speaks, sings, weeps and dances with the tender motions of love, she keeps her gaze turned on him and laughs. In this way the courtesan tempted the monk and made use of all the shifts of love.

At last she whispered: 'Sire, all my beauty is yours, and yours is mine. Give me your youth, and I will give you mine. In later years we will both forsake the world and take the path you have chosen.'

'Woe betide me! What plight have I got myself into? What

sin have I committed now? How thoughtlessly have I acted!' The hermit turned these things over in his mind, tortured by bitter self-reproach.

Although the Blessed One was far away in Jetavana, he knew at once what was going on in the heart of his disciple and smiled quietly to himself. Ananda approached his beloved lord and asked him: 'Why do you smile, master? What can the reason be?' 'In the distant town of Rajagaha, in the house of a harlot, one of our disciples is fighting his battle,' said Buddha. 'Whose will be the victory and whose the defeat?' asked Ananda. 'Sundarasamudda will win, and the harlot will lose,' answered the Blessed One. Although he sat before his disciples, he appeared to the oppressed monk in luminous form and addressed him: 'Rise, my son, and renounce lust, and be freed from desire. He who renounces desire, verily he is free in this world.'

Jambunada's Wedding Feast

Jambunada's one great wish was to invite the Blessed One to his wedding feast. When Buddha one day passed that way, he sensed the bridegroom's desire and, followed by his many disciples, entered his house. The rooms were small, yet there was room for everybody and to spare. The food was limited, but Jambunada offered it to his lord and begged: 'Eat, lord, partake of this modest food, you and your many sons.' Although each ate heartily, the food did not seem to diminish, and the bridegroom thought to himself: 'Had I invited my friends and relatives, they too would have had their fill.' Scarcely had this thought passed through his mind than friends and relatives appeared in their scores; yet it seemed as though there were room for many more. All were fed, and all were satisfied.

When the Blessed One saw so many people happily foregathered, he spoke to gladden their hearts: 'Truly, marriage is a great solace and happiness in life, for it unites two hearts in bliss. Still more wonderful is it to be wedded to truth, for when death severs even the sweetest of earthly ties, nothing can afflict him who is wedded to truth. And so I say unto you, be wedded to truth. He who desires everlasting union with his wife must be as true to her as truth itself. And she who desires everlasting union with her husband must be as true to him as

truth itself. So he will be a true comfort to her, and she to him, for verily, both are wedded to truth. Trust one another, honour and serve one another in truth. Your children will be like jewels in a crown and will adorn your hearts with bliss; they will become like their fathers and mothers and testify to their happiness. Verily, verily, I say unto you, let every man and every woman be joined in holy wedlock to truth, and let none remain single. When death comes to separate you and the body is overtaken by dissolution, you will live eternally in truth, for truth is immortal and endures for ever.'

When the guests heard these blessed words, their hearts rejoiced and each embraced a life of righteousness and truth.

Do you know the meaning of the word BUDDHA? It means that by thinking of consciousness, one becomes consciousness itself.
(Sri Ramakrishna)

Buddha did not believe in power or anything of the kind. He spoke only of the annihilation of desires. He sat to meditate beneath a tree and said: 'Let this body dry away here,' i.e. let me die on the spot if I cannot attain Nirvana. This body is a great rogue. Nothing can be achieved without controlling it.
(Vivekananda)

Let this body dry away on this spot. Let the flesh and bones be dissolved. Till enlightenment comes, which is difficult to attain even in aeons, this body shall not rise from its seat.
(Buddha)

Go forward without a path,
Fearing nothing, caring for nothing!
Wander alone like the rhinoceros!
Even as the lion, not trembling at noises,
Even as the wind, not caught in the net,
Even as the lotus leaf, unstained by the water,
Do thou wander alone like the rhinoceros!
(Dhammapada. From the teachings of Buddha)

It is true, Simba, that I denounce action, but only such action as leads to evil in thought, speech and deed. It is true, Simba,

that I preach annihilation, but only the annihilation of pride, passion, evil thoughts and ignorance, never that of forgiveness, love, mercy and truth. (Buddha)

The sun shines by day, the moon lights up the night, the warrior shines in his armour, the brahman shines in his meditation, but the awakened one shines all day and night with the radiance of the spirit.

(Dhammapada. From the teachings of Buddha)

For him who possesses nothing there is nothing to renounce. How great was the renunciation of Buddha, the Blessed One, who renounced palace life, kingship, riches, power and glory? (S.Y.)

By rousing himself, by earnestness, by restraint and control, the wise man can make for himself an island which no flood can sweep away. (Buddha)

'Monks! There are four eternal truths (*arya satya*): Suffering, the cause of suffering, the intermission of suffering, and the path out of suffering to deliverance. These are the four eternal truths.' (Buddha)



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Which of the various Yogas are you chiefly interested in?

Answer: In all Yoga systems, beginning with physical Yoga, by which I understand a few *pranayamas* and *asanas* (mastery of the vital forces by breathing exercises and certain bodily postures, with the aid of which the body is brought under control). It is much easier to control the powerful natural forces in a healthy body than in a weak one, which is open to all outside influences. The main Yoga systems, *hatha*, *karma*, *bhakti*, *raja* and *jnana*, are all of special interest to me.

The science of hatha-yoga has begun to command the admiration of modern medicine. Hatha-yoga proves that man can master his whole physical system down to its very smallest part. The brain, spinal cord and nerves—collectively known as the 'nervous system'—are completely under the control of hatha-yogis, as are also the vegetative functions of the nerves and organs. I have witnessed some astounding feats by hatha-yogis which prove this fact. One of them gave such a performance in the presence of famous doctors for the purposes of scientific investigation. Three bottles, containing sulphuric acid, nitric acid and carbolic acid, stood on a small table. To demonstrate the action of these acids, a few medical experiments were first carried out by a doctor. The yogi then took the first bottle, poured a few drops on to the palm of his right hand and licked them off with his tongue. He did the same with the other two poisons. For the next ten minutes he performed a vigorous series of *dhautis*, *uddiyanas* and *naulis* (purifying exercises); then, collecting himself with immense concentration, he eliminated the acids in his urine. A medical test proved that the acids were in fact present in the water he passed.

My master explained this feat as follows: by conscious control the yogi had suspended the assimilatory functions of his body and had thus allowed the dangerous substances to pass through his system, simultaneously condensing the process into a short space of time. Such experiments are dangerous and require

many years of exercise. Before it can satisfy such unusual demands, the body must have reached a high stage of development.

The next feat was the suppression of breathing, combined with stoppage of the heart for a full five minutes. During this period there was no perceptible pulse. A stethoscopic examination proved that there was no trickery. The gauge showed no blood pressure. The skin was very pale, as though all the blood had collected in the interior of the body. The yogi had closed eyes and was in a partial trance. After exactly five minutes his consciousness returned.

A number of cuts were then made with a knife in his right deltoid muscle, and although the surgeon did this without administering any anaesthetic, no pain was felt and there was no bleeding from the wounds. What now followed was even more interesting from the medical viewpoint. The wounds, which were fairly deep, formed a scar less than five minutes later and thus healed up. It could be seen that the yogi brought this about by intense concentration. His temperature rose to 104°F while the healing was in progress. 'This fever is produced by the yogi for two reasons,' my master later explained. 'The first is to destroy germs and impurities, and the second is to permit rapid healing of the wounds.'

I myself do not think very highly of the advanced stages of hatha-yoga, which are also directed towards longevity and the acquisition of occult powers. For these things are not the purpose of human existence, which consists solely in the attainment of divine self-awareness.

Question: Is it really true that hatha-yogis can live as long as they wish, even, say, three or four hundred years?

Answer: Why not? If a banyan tree can live a thousand years, a tortoise over three hundred, and an elephant a hundred and more, a human being who has the necessary strength of will must surely be able to attain whatever age he wishes. Given the will-power, every end can be achieved. In the South of India, in the Kodaikanal region, I saw a hatha-yogi who was said to be over three hundred years old. Many generations in the village on the edge of the jungle where the yogi lived had known him, as they had known other masters. These supermen, however, go out of the way of ordinary mortals for a number of reasons.

The body of a hatha-yogi is completely transsubstantiated, being so spiritualized and refined that any human contact is too violent for it. The sustenance such yogis take consists of rare roots and grasses, which they eat only in small quantities. Normal foods are too coarse and heavy for them. The chemical composition of their blood is quite different from that of normal humans, however highly developed. My master, who was himself a hatha-yogi, encouraged us to do only a certain number of *pranayamas* and *asanas*. He told us that he had never attempted to prolong his life, nor had he made any use of occult powers. He had brought his body to a high level of perfection only so that it could assist him in his aim of attaining spiritual illumination.

Question: Had your master any occult powers?

Answer: Yes, but he never made any show of his knowledge. Only on very rare occasions, when this was absolutely necessary, did we witness occult feats on his part. One of the boys suddenly fell ill and developed high fever. Our master then laid his right palm on the boy's forehead and fell into a trance. After a few minutes the fever declined. It turned out that the boy had been exercising a very powerful type of breathing which had heated his brain and caused a collapse. When the boy was better again, our master reproached him severely for his lack of caution in performing exercises other than those he had been told to do.

Question: What is the nature of the occult powers of a hatha-yogi?

Answer: The hatha-yogis are masters of the four elements: fire, water, earth and air. In an extremely difficult course of training which often lasts more than thirty years they obtain perfect control of their breath, or *prana*, which imparts life to the body. When they have once mastered this life-giving element, they are able to accomplish whatever they wish. *Prana* is the force which maintains life in the whole universe. Where *prana* is lacking, the apple goes bad, the grass withers, wood rots, the body dies. Through *prana* life manifests itself in all things. By his control of *prana* the yogi becomes capable of governing its manifestations as he wishes. *Prana* is in fire, water, air and earth. By mastering *prana*—whose aggregate

states are the four elements—in his own body, the yogi is able to master nature outside of his body. Not only can he expose his body for a whole day to the hottest sun without any form of protection, but he can also walk through fire or hold glowing coals in his hand. I have seen ascetics who did this without the help of any type of Yoga. Hatha-yogis can also remain in the snow for incredibly long periods without freezing. It is not unusual, at heights of 20,000 feet or more in the Himalayas, to meet yogis who will remain naked in the snow all day, defying all the hardships of the weather. They are mostly religious hermits who are carrying out penitential exercises, usually for the purpose of acquiring divine merit. For a hatha-yogi these feats require no special effort. Control of the element of water enables him to walk over its surface without sinking, and control of the element of air permits him to fly through space. I repeat: it is very difficult to meet with these supermen, and such actions are never performed in the presence of ordinary human beings, whose emanations would have too violent and too negative an effect. The old hatha-yoga texts state that these feats can be performed by the exercise of certain *asanas*, which are however very dangerous, for the escape of the breath from the body can result in a stroke and immediate death. In one of her books, Alexandra David-Neel describes the *lung-gom-pas*, Tibetan ascetics who are able to fly through the air. She herself witnessed how one of these men raised himself from the ground, descended again at a distance of some yards, then sprang into the air once more like a spring, this time landing a much greater distance away, and by this means covering an incredible amount of ground in successive leaps. He went over dangerous rocks and peaks and did not even follow a foot-path. Although he moved faster than the fastest runner, his body and his springy leaping movements gave the impression of a slowly moving object. Rare as these travellers are even on those lonely heights, any Tibetan who sees such a man will at once turn aside, for he does not dare to disturb the progress of the *lung-gom-pa*, who travels in a state of trance. To break this trance might cause sudden death as a result of the violent shock thereby entailed. When the traveller has reached his goal, he ties weights to his feet until his consciousness has returned to normal, so that his body, which has temporarily lost its

weight, does not continue to rise from the ground. The face of such a man, sunk in deep concentration, bears an indescribably exalted expression of triumph over the elements.

Hatha-yogis are able to de-materialize themselves and to materialize again thousands of miles away. This is one of their most impressive achievements. They have power over the weather, governing rain or storm, heat or cold, a faculty not unknown among Tibetan lamas. They are able to emit light from their bodies to light their way when they pass through dark woods.

Sri Ramakrishna, a great sage, was once returning to Dakshineswar, where he lived. His path led through dense thickets, and as there was no moon, the darkness was complete. Under these circumstances his progress was very laborious. A hatha-yogi who was with him noticed this and said: 'Wait, brother, I will help you.' Raising his arms, he emitted bright light from his armpits. This illuminated the whole neighbourhood and Sri Ramakrishna was able to continue on his way without difficulty. At the request of the sage, the yogi later gave up his thirst for occult powers and concentrated his thoughts entirely on God.

It is not unusual to see a gathering of all kind of animals round the cave of a hatha-yogi. Not only do stags and deer come here or even settle down to live in the company of the yogi, but tigers and elephants also visit him. In the proximity of a being who fears nothing and harms nothing, all impulses of fear and enmity disappear.

The feat of being buried alive is one that is rarely seen, but the city of Madras witnessed how a yogi was buried for three weeks. The yogi first fell into a deep trance, his breathing becoming slower till it ceased completely. The heart also stopped beating. The body was then smeared with a kind of melted wax, and when all its openings had been closed up to prevent the ingress of insects it was wrapped in thin linen. The body was now in a cataleptic state and was stiff and lifeless. It was laid in a long coffin-like case, the inside of which was lined with zinc. This case was hermetically sealed and was lowered about six feet deep into the earth. The 'grave' was now filled up with sand. Faithful pupils of the yogi kept watch day and night beside their buried master, singing pious songs and repeating holy

syllables. Crowds of people came with small sacrificial gifts suitable for a holy man, such as flowers and fruit. On the twenty-first day the case was dug up in the presence of thousands of watchers, and the cover was raised. The body was not touched till the pupils heard the holy words 'OM' from their master's lips. This was the first sign of returning life. The body was now thoroughly massaged all over, particularly on the crown of the head. The yogi gradually opened his eyes and slowly took in the thousands of people gathered round. Some pious persons have since erected a monument to the yogi. As a boy, I often visited this place. I very much regretted that my lessons had prevented me from being present on that unique occasion. For months it was one of the main topics of conversation in the city.

THOU TOO, O LORD, ART THAT

The raging tempest, her furious breath unshackling
Aged rocks on mountain tops, uprooting gigantic
Oaks and pines in play:
Thou too, O Lord, art that.
The lightning's fierce flash, igniting trees, a tongue
Of flame to devour the mountain greens:
Thou too, O Lord, art that.
The thunder's tumultuous roar in anger wild, from
Mountain down to plain, in rain his torrents releasing:
Thou too, O Lord, art that.
The blazing sun, baking the earth and spreading
The feast of famine at the door:
Thou too, O Lord, art that.
And pestilence in play to take her toll
Of half the city's worth:
Thou too, O Lord, art that.
And poverty, nude, creeping into the home of rich and poor:
Thou too, O Lord, art that.
And when, in war, the city crumbles down to dust,
And ruins gape and stare into the void:
Thou too, O Lord, art that.
All but to shake away the stagnant past,
For Thou and only Thou art that,
To breathe out the past,
To breathe in the breath of what's to come,
Thou Creator in Thy play of life and death,
Thy mercy's visage veiled:
Thou too, O Lord, art that.

THOUGHTS ON SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Who is man's great teacher? None other than man himself. Is it not he who reads the enigmatic signs at the cross-roads of life, advancing his steps from birth to birth? Are not his senses sufficient to enable him to speak his earthly tongue? Does he not come a traveller equipped for the long journey of life? What mystery does the casket of his brain conceal? And is his heart not hidden away so that none can know what treasure it contains? Like a seed yielding its possession of a mighty tree, so too does man yield the divinity he conceals. We may clothe his naked form for a while, we may strengthen his limbs with food, we may shed some earthly light on his human path, but in the end it is he who grows by giant steps, it is he who speaks the immortal tongues, and it is he who vanishes when his play is played.

None can educate man. We teach him the earthly law, but the law of life is self-learnt.

Master yourself and know that there is no other master for you.

Grow and become a giant in your outlook like the great ones of the earth. Have tremendous faith in yourself like a Vivekananda and face life when you feel like fleeing from it. The victory belongs to the hero, never to the coward. Have that immense freedom of a Buddha, whom nothing dear on earth could bind. Have that infinite love of a Jesus, whose great heart took in the saint and the sinner, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant.

No help comes from outside. All help comes from within. You are helping yourself all the time. There is no master outside your own self. To be dependent for help on an outer source makes you helpless, weak and wretched in this world. It means

you are down and the one who helps is above you. Build your future, command your destiny, rule your life and be happy.

Work your best, no matter what you do. Whether working for society or your nation, you are working for yourself, for you are society and nation in one. One gram of conscious action means tons of good for the masses. No good is lost. Fall, and your country falls with you. Arise, and your country too will rise.

Have faith in all you do. Only to the man of faith do the doors of this world open. Faith is utter dependence on the all-animating spirit within. Know that you are this spirit. Let your actions be accompanied by the power of the spirit, be it a silent thought, a spoken word or an active deed.

The strength of a nation lies not in its army of soldiers but in its men of morals. A few such will suffice to awaken the real character of the people, by the sheer force of their example. And what is stronger than character?

Whether a man tyrannizes his fellows to his own advantage or a nation tyrannizes other nations—the sense of civilization is dead in both.

Are you a help to this world with your strength or a hindrance with your weakness?

If you take the right path, society will take it too. If you quit that path, how can society follow it?

The true reformers of a nation are her individuals who reform themselves from within. Unless this is accomplished there can be no outer reform.

Can condemning this world amend matters? It brings nothing but confusion. Show the path leading out of darkness, and man will readily follow.

The world thinks that a yogi is a man of renunciation, who denies himself all that the world has to offer. On the contrary:

the yogi wants the highest gift of all, he wants life itself. He renounces only transitory pleasures and prefers the lasting joys. The common man wants a thousand things, but a yogi wants all in all. The world pursues appearances, but the yogi chooses reality.

Racial spirit possesses us as long as our person is not ripe for independent development. We are liberated the moment we see that our individual progress is a universal cause.

Gain all the experience that life can offer, and know truth. Without experience no truth will ever be yours.

Care not for the past. Care not for the future. He works best whom time cannot bind.

Have an ideal and live up to it. The rest will take care of itself.

The mind reacts to both physical and spiritual impulses. Good thoughts awaken good propensities. The mind has to be trained as the body is trained. Otherwise it is likely to fall under the influence of the senses.

There is a body-consciousness and a spirit-consciousness in man. Identified with the body-consciousness in the early stages of development, man perceives everything as matter. Growth brings him to the stage of spirit-consciousness, in which he perceives the whole universe as spirit.

Know that then alone are you spiritual when you begin to perceive God in man, when you begin to see it is Spirit which pervades all, be it a piece of shining crystal, a smiling flower, a dumb animal or a thinking man.

Be just as rational in spiritual matters as you are in the everyday affairs of life. If ordinary life demands a rational mind, spiritual life demands a mind a thousand times more rational, exact, well developed and firmly founded.

True philosophy is spirituality explained. True spirituality is philosophy fulfilled.

Philosophy and spirituality are the two scales of the balance of our life. The one is the head, the other the heart. If our ideal is to be made reality, philosophy and spirituality must balance each other.

How can a man commune with the divine if God is a separate entity? Where is the proof that each appeal or prayer is heard, and by whom is it heard? Where does this God abide? If Moses saw God in the burning bush, why does not the modern priest see the Lord likewise? If Moses saw God in the form of fire, does it not convey to our minds that this is an inner happening of the soul, where the all-animating power of the spirit is experienced as fire? Every prophet of the Old Testament who spoke with God did so within his own heart. United in prayer with the divine within, they later gave out proclamations to the masses. In an enlightened state, they rebuked the transgressors and made them change their ways. No prophet spoke of Jehova as a person, large or small, but of God as an omnipotent spirit. The teachings of the Holy Scriptures are inspired utterances of inspired men who lived inspired by the spirit *within and not without*. Inspiration is the highest manifestation of divinity in man.

Evolution is the development from instinct to reason, and from reason to inspiration. Hence inspiration cannot contradict reason, but fulfils it, in the same way as reason is the outcome of instinct.

It is not love but lust which is blind. People are blinded by lust. Real love liberates a man from lust.

Why be tragic about death? It is a moment when we are filled up to the brim and can contain no more. Death is a pause for assimilation, but soon we shall be back on earth, where our desires lie anchored.

As long as there is one single desire left in man, he will have to return to earth where it can be fulfilled at last.

The last wish of a dying man is powerful in determining his next birth.

Desire is a goal which draws us unfailingly towards it.

Success? Let each action be accompanied by the power of the spirit. What will then not succeed?

How can you work in the world with a mind in turmoil? Nothing can be achieved with a mind laden with the cares and worries of life. No amount of pondering can solve your problems. No lamenting can bring relief. Arise! And bring the mind to its abode of peace within the heart. A calm mind can accomplish everything.

Faith is the foundation-stone of life. Remove it and life itself crumbles.

Some people are afraid to be perfect. How ridiculous! As though imperfection were our nature! It is perfection we are always striving for. Our demands in life are based on perfection—clean houses, clean cities, good food, beautiful and healthy children, perfect family life, good character, strong will, self-respect and so on. The yogi is mindful of perfecting himself and thus derives the greatest happiness from life.

Do not desire to be like another. Be open to the highest and be what you are.

Why do I call myself a Christian? Is religion real to me? Have I realized a thousandth part of the love of a Christ? Have I forbearance towards my fellow-men? Have I firmness of faith, courage and fearlessness? What is at all Christian about me? My baptismal certificate or my behaviour? If Christianity is merely my confession, then let me admit I am no better than he who has no religion at all.

An atheist at least is sincere. But faith without deeds is hypocrisy.

Spirituality must be brought down to the practical level of action. Otherwise what good is it at all? Spirituality must elevate both heart and home, the individual and the masses, society and the nation.

He is truly spiritual who has unbounded faith in himself, and is able to manifest it in his simplest thoughts and daily actions.

True religion is not for the weak-hearted. It is for him alone who possesses great intensity of feeling for others, be he a saint or a sinner, be he ignorant or wise, be he rich or poor—whose heart has transcended all human limits and embraces with infinite love all created beings.

Religion is to go beyond everything that is human in us and to touch the divine. Where else is this attainable if not within?

If religion were confined to a book or a building, what would be easier than to walk into a church and get religion? Religion is the natural state of being and becoming for which we are ultimately intended. He is religious in whom the spirit begins to awaken like the morning sun. His thoughts and actions are full of light and wisdom, and he knows the true purpose of his birth.

God or spirit, animating the universe, is not matter to be seen by the physical eye. The spirit can be realized only within, and religion teaches us the means. Real religion is realization of the spirit.

Faith says, 'Pray without ceasing'; and science says, 'Struggle without ceasing'. Both are fighting for freedom, one from bondage and the other from ignorance, and both paths must ultimately converge in one. Both are looking for light. One seeks freedom from the bondage of the flesh, and the other seeks mastery over mind and matter. Both must win the victory, one with the heart and the other with the brain.

In the West, with the exception of a few great monks like

St. Francis of Assisi, none have really understood Jesus. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you,' he taught, but materialistic man will not listen and insists on a material heaven. How can such a man conceive the spirit? Who can boldly say today that he has understood this sublime truth and is ready to prove it? The challenge of truth must have the ready answer of realization. If you have not got it, then rid yourself first of superstition and then advance, not stopping till the goal of realization is yours.

If the spirit is immortal after death, it is immortal even now, and we live to prove it. It is the immortal touch of the earth's great ones which draws us to act likewise.

And what are you if not spirit? And if not spirit, then what are you?

All scriptures confirm the birth of God in man.

If you are frightened into religion by slogans of sin and hell-fire, then reject it with righteous indignation. There can be nothing more damaging to a man's soul than faith based on fear.

The greatest religion in this world is strength. And the greatest strength in this world is religion.

Dogmas are most essential at the early stage of man's evolution, just as a little pot protects a tender plant in its growth. But when the tree grows up, the pot is shattered. So when spirituality dawns, no outer help is needed. Man asserts his real strength and unfolds his divinity.

What can be elevating in a dogma as degrading as punishment for human weakness? Go back to Christ and learn to be as strong, as loving and as forgiving as He was. Where else lies the strength of your faith?

Would you deal out such diabolic chastisements as hellfire and eternal damnation to your child even for the worst of crimes? Would not your heart embrace the little one with all the love of a parent, seeking to save rather than to condemn? Why

attribute such barbaric acts to God and make the all-animating, all-sustaining and all-loving power of the universe a father of vengeance?

A rational religion based on the strong points of our Christian faith and supported by the truths of science is the only acceptable spiritual path for Europe. Nothing less can satisfy a thinking man.

Pray by all means, but not for material gain, for such is the plea of a beggar. There is nothing elevating in begging. A true prayer is immediately answered, for to emerge from it is to feel oneself a changed being, strengthened by the inner fire of the spirit.

Prayer is exactly the contrary of what most people suppose it to be. Prayer is an inner decision confirmed and implemented by proper action.

Every prayer is answered through the zeal and endeavour we put into it.

Prayer is a wonderful help, for it is the only way of really helping yourself.

Prayer is one of the means of experiencing an identity with the spirit within. It is to immerse ourselves in the source of our being in the heart, and to emerge with a power, spiritual by nature, far superior to any other force we can develop on the physical or mental plane.

If you are a dualist, let your prayer be practical: 'May thinking of Thee, O Lord, awaken my true nature of strength and manliness. May the spirit of fearlessness possess me on my way through life, and may nothing but truth be the motive of my actions.'

If you are a monist and prefer to see God in all things, even in yourself, then say: 'I must manifest the highest. I cannot be satisfied with less.'

Of talk and of theories about God the world has enough. Throw them overboard and gain your own experience. The proof of God is the experience of your own divinity. If you have no such experience, then where is the proof? All talk is vain and empty with emptiness. The rich man's proof of his wealth are his possessions, the learned man's proof of his learning is his knowledge, and the spiritual man's proof of God is the realization of his own divinity.

There is no such thing as spiritual authority. If there were, experience would be the greatest.

Religion is a private affair. It cannot be collective. It is the individual seeking to express the highest, sublimest and noblest.

The heart and the head are like two pans of a balance. They must weigh all our actions. Intellect without feeling or feeling without intellect cannot but upset the equilibrium of life.

True actions are born in the heart, bred in the brain and performed by the hand.

Actions live when you live in them.

I say what my heart knows, and know what my heart says.

Why flee from circumstance? It is often circumstance that brings to light all that's best in you.

Circumstances mould a man, but it is he who seeks them.

Only cowards are weak. Be fearless and strong. The world respects only her heroes.

To survive is the law of nature. But cowards perish. They are mercilessly swept away by the current of circumstances! It is the hero who lives and enjoys the earth.

Who but the fool will choose his death rather than strive with fate to bend it to his will?

Every breath you take has a reaction. Every thought you think has a reaction. So act, knowing what you want.

Nobody else causes our misery. Nobody else causes our happiness. We alone cause our misery. We alone cause our happiness.

Where fear is, there is hate. Where hate is, there is shame.

I do not want a teacher who influences me. I want a teacher who tells me not to be influenced.

Independence of thought is the first sign of freedom. Till you have this you are a slave to circumstances.

Think with your brain bold, fearless thoughts and let them pervade each breath you breathe, each word you speak and each deed you do. That is the way to change your course from weakness to strength, from slavery to freedom, from everything death-bringing to everything life-bringing.

What if the scriptures contain the greatest truths? What if the prophets proclaim their message to man? What if tradition guards her thousand doors? What if society upholds its sacred rules? Let them all have their say. He is a giant who takes in all things and yet goes beyond them all.

Brute force is not all. A bull with all its strength remains only a bull. Man alone has the means to go beyond the brute stage by transmuting these forces into spiritual powers.

He who can transform his animal forces into spiritual powers becomes a store-house of strength. All progress is based on the control of the animal forces within. Let them loose, and they mercilessly drag you down. Harness them, and they make gods out of men.

In him the spirit shines who has done away with hatred, fear and shame.

Never judge a man by his errors. See his virtues, and help him to see them. The strength of his virtues will help him to overthrow his weakness.

If you demand perfection from your fellow-men, then show them that you believe in their perfect nature.

He who never errs, never accomplishes.

Ten thousand times to fall is ten thousand times to rise.

None is born too low to rise. Whoever rises has risen from beneath.

Let strong thoughts enter your minds from childhood onwards. Lay yourselves open to them, and not to weakening and paralysing ones. Say to your mind: 'I AM THE SELF, the ever free, the ever strong, immortal SELF.' Let this ring day and night in your minds like a song, and at the point of death declare: 'I AM THE SELF.'

Still your tongue to know your mind. Still your mind to know your SELF.

Confining the mind within an ever-diminishing circle is called concentration. The wandering mind is gathered in and becomes one-pointed, illuminating our inner path to the Self.

Truth without compromise is the absolute condition for realizing God.

In your quest for truth, do not give up reason. Reason is the searchlight which reveals the bare truth of religion.

Instinct, reason and inspiration are the three expressions of man. Instinct is his physical, reason his mental and inspiration his spiritual expression.

Instinct belongs to the animal plane of our being, reason to the human plane and inspiration to the divine.

What can the man of prayer not attain? His is the power to slam closed the doors of hell, and to throw open the broad gates of heaven.

The real man is he in whom instinct, reason and inspiration are fully awake and active.

Gold remains gold whether it falls in the ditch or is placed on the holiest of altars. So it is with him in whom the spirit shines. Nothing in this world can defile him, even though he mix with publicans and sinners.

He alone can lead others who is able fearlessly to lead himself.

Spirituality is the conscious manifestation of the divinity embodied in man.

Moral power is far greater than the deadliest weapons of war. Mighty Attila turned back at the gates of Rome, convinced that the spiritual power of the Pope and his small band was far superior to his own invincible army.

When you begin to perceive the evanescent nature of this world, when you begin to see that there can be no reality in that which ever changes, then only does life release you from her clutches of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. When you realize that life is a ceaseless dream, then alone will her mesmerizing charm cease to grip you, then alone are you liberated from the prison-house of circumstance you have built around yourself. The scales fall from your eyes and you behold the truth: that you are spirit which cannot change, that you are spirit which cannot decay, that you are spirit which cannot die, that you are life eternal and omnipotent.

Suffering is our least loved teacher, who in those long lonesome hours teaches us the lessons we need.

Suffering somehow sets things right for us in life, if only we have enough patience to endure.

Many great things were born in solitude and suffering.

How great an art to be simple, how simple to be complex!

Misfortune, however great, is yet a stepping-stone to truth.

Truth, however small, is the harvest of years of pain.

No great lesson can be learnt overnight. Often pain, our teacher, must lead our feet through hell to heaven.

Great men are but manifestations of great man.

Life will yield the very best if we want the very best.

To bear a simple truth often needs a mammoth's strength, for truth weighs heavier than anything else in this universe.

Truth is the weapon that makes a man invincible.

Only a coward flees circumstances; the hero conquers them.

There is a reason for all things. If a raindrop has a purpose, then man too will know his one day.

Sentimental prayers may befit a soft nature, but he who wants results must demand God's very best.

Can you struggle? Then do so and know that you are getting somewhere. It is better to struggle than to stagnate and die a common death.

If we come to earth as babies, then let us leave as men.

We conquer heights; we fight the elements; we vanquish foes. And have yet to win the greatest of all victories: over man, the unknown.

We do not need a religion which reminds us of our weakness, but one that awakens our strength.

A revengeful God chastising his children for human weaknesses would be worse than a demon. But such a God does not exist. If we know our higher nature of forbearance, love and understanding, then alone can we understand God.

Doubt can exist only on the plane of duality where the senses rule. It ceases the moment we raise our consciousness to the level of the Self, whose nature is absolute oneness.

What do you care how your ancestors thought, or how people today think? What matters is how *you* think. Think independent, fearless thoughts born of the wealth of your own experience.

He who says, 'I believe in God,' and yet does not believe in himself, is contradicting himself. Where is the proof of his belief? If we cannot prove what we believe in, on what is such a faith founded, except superstition? The very fact that you are, proves the existence of God.

Can you think a dozen sound thoughts a day? Then know that the day has not been spent in vain.

Believe me, if you lose your all and yet possess an infinitesimal part of truth, you possess more than a man with millions who has no truth.

Mysteries and miracles are the bane of all religions. True spirituality stands for itself with truth as foundation and character as backbone.

If you believe in God as spirit, then see Him as the animator of the universe, manifesting Himself through the myriad expressions of life. And know man to be His greatest expression on earth.

If instinct and reason are the branches and leaves, inspiration is surely the finest fruit of life.

Instinct belongs to the body, reason to the brain and inspiration to the heart. When they are born, then Man is born.

One must inhabit the heart in order to inhabit the earth.

Possess a lion's heart and give up all whelpish feelings of jealousy, hatred and anger. They are not becoming to one who wants to manifest the spirit. His nature must be all strength, all forbearance, all love and all peace.

Just as a mighty ocean remains unruffled by a little breeze, so the strength of the man of spirit is unaffected by human weakness.

Verily and truly, his prayer is answered who emerges from it a better man.

If prayer is not a realization, it is a lie.

Look back into the past, full of experience. Look ahead into the future, full of hope. And live in the eternal present, with past and future at your feet.

Present is the past conquered and the future attained.

The lofty ideal of the Almighty we set before our eyes proves that we possess the same loftiness.

Any fool can destroy. But he is a man of strength who can build.

The sign of strength is controlled action.

What of the falls? What of the failures? Dare ascend, and you will. Dare not, and you will remain below.

Man is the culmination of creation. In him alone are the animal, human and divine propensities active and alive.

I must manifest the highest. I cannot be satisfied with less.

With God, life and strength within me, how can I be weak?

The sybils of old are still alive, crying their oracles at the threshold of man's heart. If the hand is rash and the brain is bewildered, the heart is there, still throbbing, appealing for sober action, common sense and prudent deeds.

Just as the air which fills all space cannot be limited, so the Lord of the universe cannot be limited. While we retain the wonderful expression of faith in which we were born, let the gates of our heart be opened wide to all the existing expressions of faith, that we may enjoy their manifold manifestations.

The fire of creative genius consumes everything human within him who can bear its ruthless blaze. It leaves no mark, but reveals what we are in truth.

How can man be superior to woman? Is it not woman who gives birth to man?

Like light dispelling darkness, so does awareness dispel ignorance.

Religion is a spiritual enclosure. Grow within it, get strong, then grow out of it. No enclosure is then needed. The real spiritual man must outgrow all limitations and become universal like a Jesus or a Buddha or a Vivekananda. Religion goes beyond everything human and touches the divine.

Reason must be the fundamental basis of spirituality. Otherwise the brain becomes morbid and full of superstition. But once the ideal is conceived, go beyond reason and realize the ideal.

The universal mind must be philosophical to the extent of transcending human limitations and touching the ultimate reality within—mystical to the extent of being able to control the mind and give it the highest expression of the spirit—emotional to the extent of expressing the profoundest and sublimest feelings of the heart—and active to the extent of expressing perfection and absolute freedom in work.

To think is to create. But the effort depends on us.

Real thought is highest action.

The destruction of doubt and the construction of faith in oneself is prayer.

Religion is more than talk, for mere talk does not bring realization. The real test of religion is realization.

If I consider myself practical, I must prove it in every field of action, both material and spiritual. Otherwise what is practical about me?

What other authority do we need than our own true self?

Be strong as strength itself, for from strength come all things.

Only the weak are trapped in the whirlpool of this small world. He is free whose consciousness is awake and alert, for everything succumbs to him whose will is founded in the spirit.

This ruthless age knows no mercy for the weak. To do or die is the watchword. Fight fate with bold deeds, or succumb to the waves of circumstance.

Mercy, God and grace? What useless words to lazy fools, yet what truth to one ablaze with active courage!

Youth is the foundation-stone to the magnificent edifice of life. Let it be laid securely lest everything later crumble.

The spirit of an action shows how much truth it contains.

Individuality is born the moment the spirit in man is awake.

Act as you like, but add a grain of truth to what you do and 'deeds' will be born.

Action without spirit is like salt without flavour.

Bring light and not darkness into your thoughts. For then alone does the spirit shine. Bring light and not darkness into words. For then alone does the spirit shine. Bring light and not darkness into your deeds. For then alone does the spirit shine. Bring light into your home and deify it. Bring light into your church and deify it. Bring light into your nation and deify it. Such actions are the true signs of spirituality, and he is religious in whom such a spirit is awake.

He who has chosen to grow must walk alone.

He who works with the power of goodness, him no grief can touch, no evil approach.

Pioneers of new thought must be ready to face opposition if they are to progress. Fearlessly destroying the husks of the past, they prepare the birth of the future.

He who does not dissipate his forces but controls them becomes a leader of men. He exerts a powerful influence on the masses and leads them onward. His thoughts will penetrate into the core of society and raise men and women to deeds of courage, strength and manliness. His words will awaken. His deeds will liberate. And his very touch will change men.

Our duty is to accompany our children up to the gateway of maturity and then let them continue on their own. The only equipment they need for life's journey is an ideal of secular and religious knowledge personified in their parents, teachers and priests. The correct impetus is the pillar of true education.

The world will always stand in need of leaders. Thus we shall always have Krishnas, Buddhas, Christs and Vivekanandas to lead the masses in work, wisdom, love and service. We need many such flaming torches to inspire the heart and limbs to act. Whenever a nation has reached its highest, it has always been at the inspiration of some dazzling comet who has imparted the true impetus of action.

Learn to give. Give with an open heart, be it material,

secular or spiritual help. Everything comes to the one who gives. His heart is open to permit the infinite expression of life. To him life brings the very best.

Whenever the animal is awake in man, the spirit of destruction seizes him and he leaves behind him the mark of decadence. Whenever divinity is awake in man, he manifests his best and elevates the world around him.

Fanaticism is the shell of a puny faith. Break down its walls and let your eyes behold the infinite nature and omnipotence of the spirit.

Watch yourself as if in a mirror and see whether your actions are such as to bring you contentment. Such a diligent investigation is bound to lift you upwards.

A nation soon dies out if it does not produce the right type of men for its task. Produce strong men, vigorous and sincere to the backbone! Produce men of valour! Produce men of faith! For such are the salt of the nation and such are the foundation of the great national edifice, sheltering, protecting and inspiring future generations for ages to come.

There is no greater freedom than the freedom of the mind, and we have every right to try the different methods leading to the gates of truth. Our aim is to reach it, and all our life tends towards this realization, either consciously or unconsciously. All outer aids are signposts to heaven, but heaven must be realized within the heart, and our guide is our silent Self.

Be firm and determined! Character means the crystallization of one's best qualities. The expression of your true, divine nature comes from controlling and concentrating your best forces.

It is only the man who understands the worth of precious stones who is able to assess the true worth of a diamond. It is only the man who appreciates his own worth who is able to estimate the worth of his fellow-men.

He is universal who possesses the vastness of the whole human race in his outlook.

Sublime thoughts are born when the Self reflects on its sublime nature.

Never forget that the spirit within you is a king. Hence, behave like a king.

Spirituality is the fine blossoming of the soul. The material expression of the body gradually yields to the all-permeating power of the spirit, which gives a heavenly expression to man. It is the spirit which shines through him.

STAND UP AND BE FREE!

'Stand up and be free! Know that every thought and word that weakens you in this world is the only evil that exists. Whatever makes man weak, and fear, is the only evil that should be shunned!'
(Vivekananda)

Read this thought again and again till it pervades your being, till it becomes part of you, till it belongs to your life, till it throbs through every beat of your heart, so that you never forget its profound significance. Know that the cause of all suffering lies in your coming under the influence of something. It may be a thought, an idea, an opinion, a human being or some inanimate thing to which you are bound, be it good or evil. As soon as anything influences us, we lose our freedom and are unhappy. Our true nature is nothing but freedom, for we are spirit, that knows no bondage. Nothing can influence us if we are not bound. How can we attain this state of liberty? How can we be free of influences? Yogis say that this state is attainable, and their own lives prove it. They say: 'Take no heed of the opinions of your fellow-men, whether they are good or bad.' That is the first step. If a yogi is praised or blamed, does this impress him? Not at all. He who does not sit in judgement is above every judgement. If you are praised, accept the praise without being impressed by it. If you are blamed, do not let it upset you. No judgement ever created a human being. This attitude will help you to shed your fetters and to free yourself of all outward influences. By and by you will also learn to overcome your own thoughts. You will learn from experience that every thought that takes shape in your brain consciously or unconsciously permeates your being and leaves its mark upon you. If your thoughts are negative, their influence will be detrimental. You should likewise not pass judgement on others. If you harbour thoughts of distaste, hatred or annoyance, their destructive power will act on your own body and soul, and your whole being will suffer great harm. Yogis say that thought is the greatest force in the body. It is more powerful than any physical force,

and greater than the spoken word, for it is a transcendental force that pervades the universe. Good thoughts, however insignificant they may seem, will not fail to have their effect. Be courageous and know that you shape your own destiny. Think healthy thoughts, think elevated thoughts, and above all thoughts that you would like to see translated into deeds. With a little perseverance you will soon control your thoughts, which will then help you instead of hindering you. Instead of sowing loads of irresponsible thoughts that poison your own life and the life of those you come in contact with, master your thoughts and be aware of the power you possess. Then you will experience the truth of Vivekananda's words:

‘If matter is mighty,
thought is almighty.’

BEGIN THE DAY WITH YOGA

Practical hints for students

Many people who take an interest in Yoga would like to know why one should begin the day with Yoga exercises. Some of them have asked whether it would matter if they did the exercises in the evening or only a few times a week, as they have so little time. This is certainly not the same as doing the exercises regularly at the same time in the morning, but it is of course better than not doing them at all. We do Yoga exercises to speed up the development of our physical, spiritual and mental faculties and to obtain perfect control of our life. This must be our ideal, and our efforts must be directed towards this end. It can only be attained by hard work and perseverance.

To begin the day under nervous stress is to end it under nervous stress. Chaos will always end in chaos. Yoga (see table of exercises in *Yoga and Health*) helps us to begin the day peacefully and in equanimity. The liberation of enormous energies during the exercises makes us aware of the forces at our disposal, and this awareness lasts through the day. Our very nature will be ennobled in this way, and in the course of time we shall manifest the qualities of a yogi. Instead of running about aimlessly, we shall become steadfast and firm and shall radiate life and strength like the sun.

We shall experience striking signs of progress in our exercises, so that it will be impossible for us to manifest our earlier weaknesses of character. Fear, hatred, false shame, cowardice, pessimism and the like will now run counter to our nature. We shall be overtaken by the sudden decision to put an end to these impediments to our progress, and we shall be transformed into agents of positive action.

Indian mothers are the first to get up in the morning; they sweep the floor, clean the house and burn incense in order to purify the air and to make it more pleasant for the occupants of the house. Each one takes his bath in silence and prepares himself for meditation. Some perform bodily exercises while others

practise mental yoga, then they go out to work. A day begun in this peaceful state of mind gives the Hindu the conviction that his day's work will be fruitful.

In India even the simplest man addresses his spiritual appeals to himself. A good beginning means a good end, for no good thing, he says, can ever be lost. Prayer without action is no better than a dream. To keep the mind directed towards the ideal of perfection: this is prayer. Yet the fulfilment of prayer can only be attained by personal endeavour and by great effort: for the ideal of perfection must be practical. We should give our children an education which always reminds them of their ideal. Instead of useless stories based on sentimentality, we should tell them the plain truth and attempt to instil into them a firm belief in their divine nature. Divinity is a condition which can only be attained in the self, for it is indeed the highest expression of our own nature.

Yogis assure us that 21,600 breaths per day are allotted to each person. The faster we use them, the shorter is our earthly life. Just as a reasonable man is careful with his money, so the yogi is careful with his breath. A yogi breathing exercise, carried out slowly and intensely, helps the student to make economical use of his own strength and to lengthen his life. In the course of time this controlled and conscious breathing becomes a habit. Nervousness and strain vanish, for the batteries of the nerves are charged with new strength at each breath. There is a close connection between the blood and the breath. At each breath the blood receives not only oxygen but also *prana*, the creative life force. Healthy blood means vigorous health. There is nothing better than correct breathing to keep the blood pure and the organism strong.

Progress in Yoga is only possible when the way ahead is clear. Weakness destroys all progress. Whatever weakens us, and this alone, is evil and must be eliminated.

Nicotine and alcohol are potential poisons which must be avoided by the Yoga student. His latent forces cannot develop if his organism is poisoned. Under the noxious influence of nicotine the senses are blunted and certain vital brain centres are put out of action, which greatly impairs the development of the memory. Isolation, distraction and forgetfulness are the

results. When the mental forces are lost, there can be no concentration, and without concentration there is no progress.

The advantages of the Yoga *asanas* or postures are manifold. Certain exercises improve the health, while others drive impurities out of the body and so facilitate the healing of diseases and disorders.

Asanas permit the easy control of important nerve centres which are distributed over the whole body and cannot be influenced even by dynamic gymnastics. Each Yoga posture serves temporarily as a dam which helps to store up reserve strength in the nerve networks or plexuses.

The *padmasana* or lotus seat appears to many Western students of Yoga like a contortionist's trick, yet it is not by any means as impossible as it seems. Patient daily exercise for many months and even years may be necessary till the posture has been mastered. Yogis, too, practise certain postures for years at a time. However, nobody should overtax his abilities in order to obtain quicker results. The limbs should never be unduly strained, for sinews, muscles and ligaments are easily injured. The posture can be attempted every evening before going to bed. A light massage of the knee and ankle with oil will often make the exercise easier. Those who practise it with perseverance will find that they do not have to wait long for success.

Instructions: Sit down with legs outstretched. Take the right foot and pull it gently over the left thigh. Then move the left foot on to the right thigh by bending the left knee. With the hands on the knees, breathe deeply and slowly. After a few seconds, relax. Remain a few seconds longer in this position each day.

Effect: No other exercise gives the body and mind such perfect equilibrium and stability as does *padmasana*. It is known as 'the excellent seat of the yogis'. In this position the forces of the body are easily harmonized. A ceaseless stream of healthy blood circulates from the bottom of the spine to the brain and regenerates the whole nervous system. The powers of resistance are greatly strengthened. The mind is soon calm, and undisturbed concentration is possible.

Yoga is the purest form of mental training. It is the mental content of Yoga that gives beauty to the body too. Yoga is the spiritualization of the body. It aids the human mind to control its material embodiment.—Know the object of every exercise you do; Yoga is only useful when it is practised with conscious intent.

TEACHINGS FROM THE MAHABHARATA

What weighs heavier than the earth?
What stands higher than the heavens?
What is fleeter than the wind?
What is more in number than the grass?

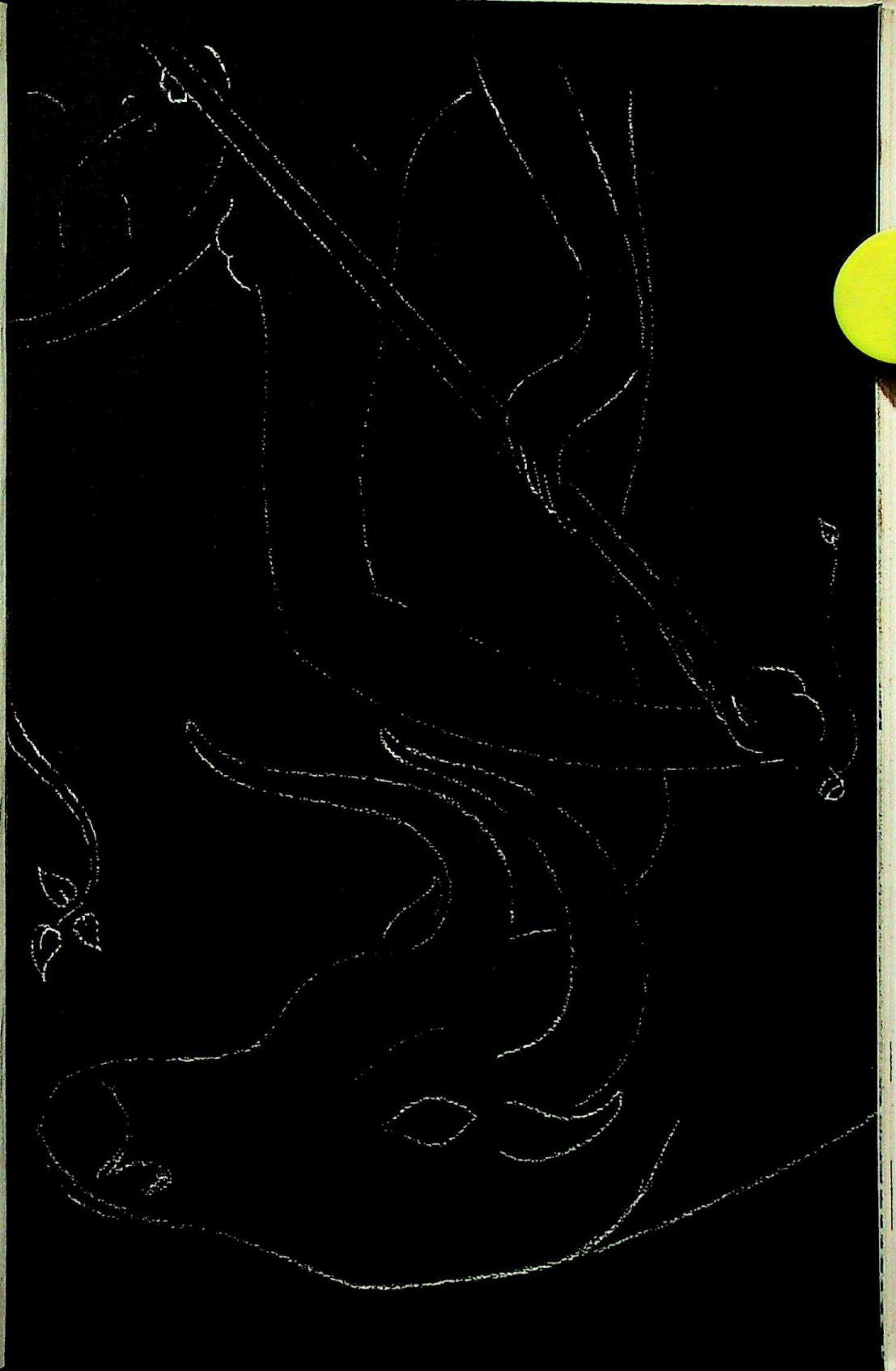
The words of a mother weigh heavier than the earth.
A father stands higher than the heavens.
The mind is fleeter than the wind.
Thoughts are more in number than the countless blades of
the grass.

Who is a friend on a journey?
Who is a friend at home?
Who is the friend of the sick?
Who is the friend of the dying?

The friend on a journey is the caravan.
The friend at home is the housewife.
The friend of the sick is the physician.
The friend of the dying is grace.

What foe is hardest to overcome?
What sickness has no end?
What man is good and
what man is evil?

Anger is the hardest to overcome.
Greed is the sickness that has no end.
The good man is he who loves all creatures, and
the evil man is he whose heart knows neither mercy nor
compassion.



What is the road to heaven?

Truthfulness.

How does a man find happiness?

By right action.

What must he subdue in order to escape grief?

His thoughts.

When is a man loved?

When he is without vanity.

THOU GOD OF STRENGTH

To Swami Vivekananda

Thou God of strength!
To burst upon the world
And grind its fetters into dust!
To come as a comet
And move man's slumbering heart to act!
Thy voice of thunder
Did awaken the dead man's soul!
Thou warrior!
Alone didst thou march on to the battle-field
With legions of Gods to sing thy praise,
With lightning as helmet to blind the foe!
With the drum of the Vedas
To sound the eternal march of man!
Thy clarion call from peak to plain:
'Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!'

Bharata's most noble son!
Hearing thy children call didst thou come
To lead us by the hand and say:
'Shake off thy slumber and thy sloth!
Shake off thy binding shackles!
Shake off thy weakness and thy woe!
Bound is he who says he's bound!
Free is he who says he's free!
Arise! Awake! And onward go!'

Thou warrior! Thou blazing torch of light!
A thought of thee suffices,
For courage courses through our veins
And rushes to the heart,
And speaks with action bold.

Thy message we hear through all eternity:
'Be manly!
Be fearless!
Be free!
Stoop not, nor stop! But
Arise! Awake! And onward go!'

Prostrated by slavery, we lay low,
Covered by the dust of dark centuries.
But thy touch of power has awakened
Bharata to breathe once more.
What thou didst breathe into her ear
Now throbs in her heart aloud:
'Awake! Awake! Aryavarttha!
Arise! Awake!
And stop not till the goal is reached!'

Dream's curtain is drawn,
The sleep is over;
Bharata rises once more
To herald her hero's message to the world;
His biddings to fulfil,
From peak to plain she now proclaims:
'Arise! Awake, O man!
And stop not till the goal is reached!'

FACTS AND REFLECTIONS

A man-making education is the need of the times. If our parents, teachers and priests fail to provide it, education does not deserve the name it bears.

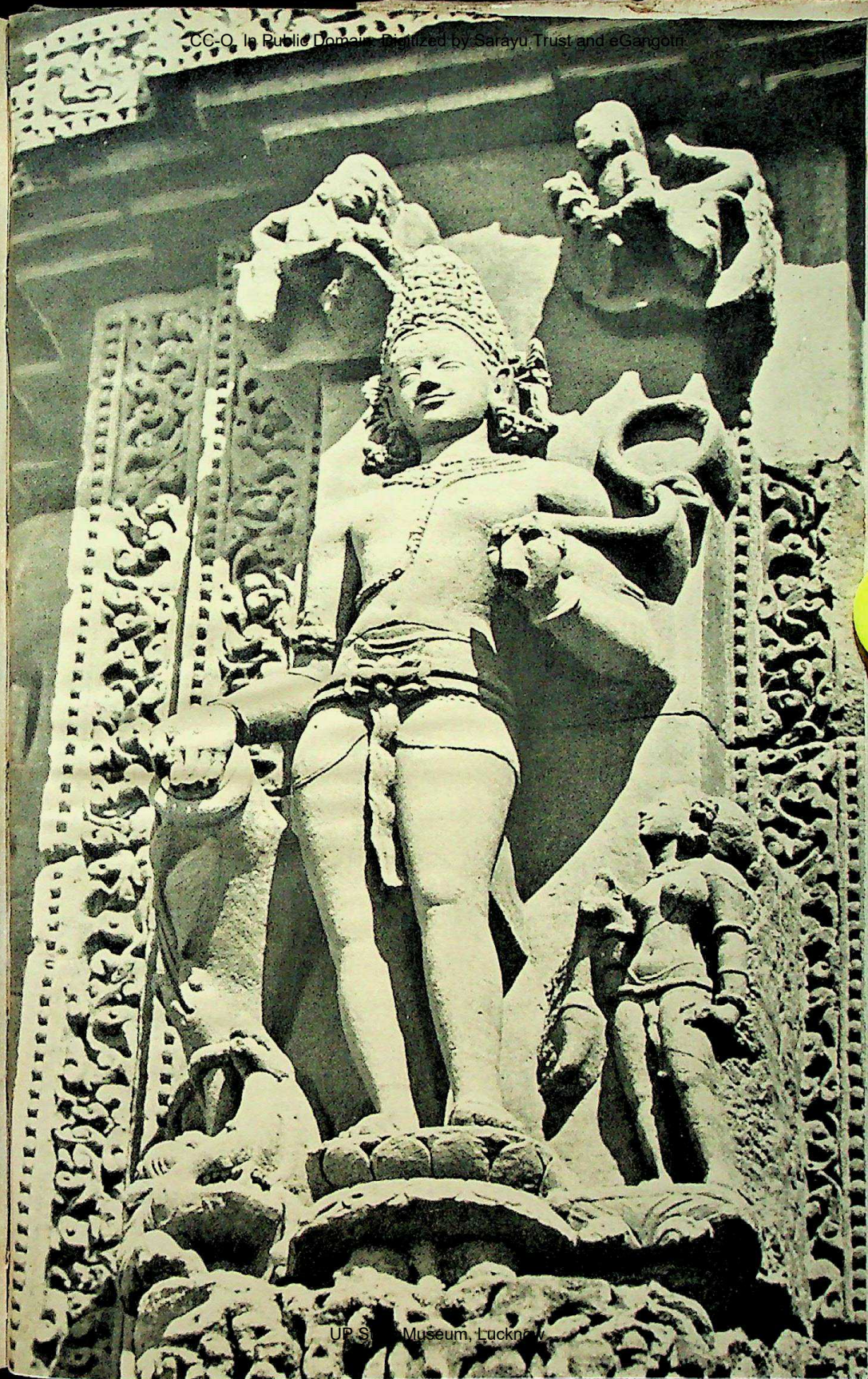
When a pupil of my master once censured the passivity of a pessimistic colleague in strong terms, our master remarked in a friendly tone: 'When it is a matter of improving one's neighbour, censure is just as fruitless as his own passive attitude to life. Show him rather how he can become optimistic.'

'Never reproach anybody for his faults,' our master taught us; 'don't you see that he is taking great pains to make progress himself, however little it may be?'

I once asked my master to help me overcome certain weaknesses, for I knew that he was quite capable of doing so. With an understanding smile he said: 'But my son, the joy of the struggle would be lost, and the credit for the victory would not be yours!'

Our duty is to accompany our children to the gateway of maturity and then to let them develop on their own. The only equipment they need for life is an ideal of secular and religious knowledge personified by their parents, teachers and priests. The right example is the pillar of true education.

The word 'yogi' must be understood in its right sense. It has nothing to do with the so-called 'yogis' who irresponsibly write or preach all manner of undigested thoughts they have borrowed from others, and not infrequently publish them under the name of Yogi So-and-So. 'Yogis' of this kind seem to spring like mushrooms from the soil of America, Great Britain, Germany and other countries. Yet none of them has the slightest idea what Yoga really is. It is obviously very simple to achieve



perfection simply by adopting the title of 'Yogi'. But is it so easy to become a yogi, a perfect being, an enlightened and liberated soul, free from all human shortcomings, without many years of struggle and effort? The difference between one of these common or garden yogis and a true man of God is as great as that between a pebble and the Himalayas, or between a drop of water and the infinite ocean. Never be deceived by these self-designated yogis! When you hear that a yogi has put in an appearance somewhere, be on your guard!

The word 'yogi' is not a title but connotes a person who, by advancing along the path of life, has reached the final goal—the state of perfection. A yogi is a man who after many years and many lives of hard self-discipline has attained perfection as the reward for his endeavours. He has realized in himself the ideal of mankind, which is the spirit of a man of God.

The central point of every existing religion is some great teacher who proclaimed truths and was followed by the masses. Without the teacher the religious structure would crumble. The Vedas are the only sacred writings that are not based on a definite personality or scripture but make man himself the central figure of evolution, raising him to his final state, that of divinity. Their laws are universal and govern the inward development of man. The Vedas lay stress on the essential attributes of man, no matter what his faith, and help him to attain his goal. They may therefore be regarded as a universal religion which makes a man better within the limits of his own creed.—Vivekananda said: 'It is a peculiarity of the Vedas that, alone of all religious writings, they repeatedly declare that the believer must outgrow them. The Vedas state that they are written only for the as yet undeveloped mind; as the mind develops, it grows out of the Vedas and must then find its way alone!'

It is not a bread-winning education that we need today, for this does no more than satisfy our animal needs. Raise yourself above mere bodily requirements and seek the true education which will place you firmly on your feet for all time. An education which always keeps our human dignity before us and makes us free and fearless in our approach to life: this should be our goal.

Three types of people do not sleep the night through: the *rogis*, the *bhogis* and the *yogis*. The *rogis* (the sick) are sleepless because of their illness and their suffering, the *bhogis* because of the pleasures they are intent upon, and the *yogis* because they wish to pass the short span of life in watchfulness and meditation.

The greatest epic in the world is the Mahabharata of the Hindus, consisting of 200,000 verses of Sanskrit. In olden times the poem was not preserved in writing, but was known by heart by the scholars. Even today one comes across people with the same extraordinary memory, who can recite the epic from beginning to end and even backwards from the last line to the first.

There are no idols in India. The so-called "idol" really represents an ideal. It is a symbol recalling the attributes for which man strives. A picture of a person we know reminds us of him, but is not by any means the person himself. In the same way the innumerable statues of gods in India are not idols, but personified attributes of the deity. The cross was used in India in ritualistic worship more than 2,000 years before Christ. The triangle represents the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, who again personify the three aspects of creation, preservation and destruction. The swastika was the oldest form of the cross, the square was often used as a symbol of the four elements, fire, water, earth and air, the circle represented infinity, and so on; all of them were used as symbols to assist man in concentration on his devotions. We Christians use the cross or crucifix which directs our thoughts to Jesus Christ. We recognize the dove as the symbol of the Holy Ghost, and the lamb as that of Christ's great sacrifice in taking on human form on the material plane. But these are no more idols to us than the various symbolic figures are to the Hindus.

The religion of the Hindu is exceedingly logical. Thus we find that in India science, logic and philosophy go hand in hand with the expression of faith. To the Hindu mind a religion must be logical, scientific and philosophic.

Some twenty-five years ago, during the lifetime of Mahatma Gandhi, the poverty-stricken masses of India learned to accept their fate without complaint. It was a time of great political tension, for India wanted to recover her freedom. Owing to the very dry weather there was a scarcity of food and water throughout the country. Millions of wells dried up, the rivers were low, the crops were parched by the fierce sun, herds of cattle perished and famine threatened the nation. The visitations of similar catastrophes in the past had taught the Hindus to accept their fate in silence. But in those years the misery and suffering became insupportable, and to forget their troubles many people took to drinking toddy (a kind of sweet grog) or *arrak* (a particularly strong alcoholic drink). Mahatma Gandhi realized the danger and appealed to the people's reason. Yet nothing could move them to give up what they regarded as their only solace in their suffering. The number of taverns increased constantly. Gandhi's disciples and supporters carried on for months begging the bewildered people to desist. When all their persuasions proved futile, however, Gandhi resorted to his unfailing 'passive resistance', which in this case took a peculiar form. One day, as I was coming home from school, I was confronted by a most unusual scene, the reality of which I was at first hardly able to credit: there, before the entrances to several taverns, Gandhi's disciples lay in the dust and dirt of the road. One of them, who seemed to be their leader, stood in the midst and addressed the customers of the tavern and the passers-by as follows: 'We no longer raise our voices, dear friends, we no longer appeal to you, we set up no prohibitions at all. Come, friends, enter your tavern: walk over us into your house of pleasure. We are your servants, so consider us humbler than the dust under your feet. . . .' Several prominent personages of the town were among the army of the peacemakers. University professors, doctors, judges, lawyers and men of all ranks lay there before the people. The effect of this demonstration was overwhelming. Hundreds of passers-by followed the example thus given them. Even some of those who had come to drink flung themselves down on the ground. Some of the tavern-keepers themselves were so moved by the sight that they smashed the big pots of toddy, closed their shops and begged the disciples of Gandhi to rise and return home.

Mahatma Gandhi won many of his battles with a power that was mightier than the sword and that gave him the faculty not only of dissipating the hate of his enemies but even of winning them over by the power of his great love.

‘How are women regarded in India?’ a student recently asked me. ‘As mothers,’ I replied. ‘Mothers mean everything to us, and in every woman we see a mother, which is why we call her by that name. Since it is through our mother that we greet the light of this world, we hold her in highest esteem and grant her a higher position than our father. The ancient law-givers promulgated laws applying to women for the good of society, and these laws are still in force today. Here are a few of them:

“A head teacher is ten times more to be venerated than an ordinary teacher, a father a hundred times more than a head teacher, but a mother a thousand times more than a father.”

“The mouth of a mother is ever pure.”

“Where women are honoured, the gods are pleased. Where women are not honoured, no prayer is answered.”

“Where women live in sorrow, the family soon perishes. Where women live in happiness, the family always prospers.”

“Man is strength, woman is beauty; he is the reason that governs, and she the wisdom that moderates.”

“To despise a woman is to despise one’s own mother.”

“A woman’s tears bring down the wrath of heaven on him who causes them to flow.”

“The blessings of a woman are the blessings of heaven itself.”

THE WORDS OF YOGI PADMASAMBHAVA

Padmasambhava is said to have described the stages of the mystic path in the following ways:

1. To read a large number of books on the various religions and philosophies. To listen to many learned doctors professing different doctrines. To experiment oneself with a number of methods.

2. To choose a doctrine among the many one has studied and to discard the others, as the eagle carries off only one sheep from the flock.

3. To remain in lowly condition, humble in one's demeanour, not seeking to be conspicuous or important in the eyes of the world, but behind apparent insignificance to let one's mind soar high above all worldly power and glory.

4. To be indifferent to all things, behaving like the dog or the pig that eat what chance brings them. To make no choice among the things which one meets, abstaining from all effort to acquire or avoid anything. To accept with equal indifference whatever comes, riches or poverty, praise or contempt, giving up the distinction between virtue and vice, honour and shame, good and evil. Not to be afflicted, nor to repent of whatever one may have done, yet, on the other hand, never to be elated or proud on account of what one has accomplished.

5. To consider with perfect equanimity and detachment the conflicting opinions and the various manifestations of the activity of living beings. To understand that such is the nature of things, the inevitable mode of action of each entity, and to remain always serene. To look at the world as a man standing on the highest mountain of the region looks at the valleys and the lesser summits spread out below him.

CHILDREN'S SAYINGS

A little boy comes to his mother and says, hoping to persuade her to play with him: 'Mummy, I'm all alone.' His mother tells him: 'My child, you're never alone, God's always with you.' The little boy protests: 'No, He's not with me, He isn't here.' Then, after a moment of thought: 'And even if He is here, then I'm all alone with God.'

A mother prays with her child: '... in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen.' To this the child adds: 'And the holy Mother of God.' Asked why he wants to mention God's mother too, he says simply: 'Well, she has to do the cooking for the other three, doesn't she?'

A VITAL QUESTION OF OUR DAY

Question: Yoga teaches that man is in essence divine. My experience of the world seems to prove the contrary, as I have often had to struggle against the evil, if not diabolical, nature of man. Is Yoga not rather a doctrine of peace, of ethics and morals, intended to bring a little light into the darkness of our modern world? I admit that my standpoint, in believing man to be base by nature, is a subjective one. The many conflicts I have had to face in life have robbed me of the power to believe that man has anything divine in his essential nature. An example will serve to illustrate this. As a non-smoker I have often asked my colleagues in the office for a little more consideration, as my health is seriously affected by having to breathe suffocating air laden with nicotine. My words, however, have fallen on deaf ears, and I have even been scoffed at as a weakling and told plainly to look for another job if I find smoking offensive. Such words cut me to the quick, and had I not the heavy responsibility of a father of five children I should have left the place long ago. How would you have reacted in my place, as a powerless little clerk, too insignificant to be heeded?

Answer: In the first place, whenever a man debases himself and forgets his human dignity, I try to awaken him out of his self-imposed hypnosis. The attitude of weakness is despised by the strong, who instinctively oppress the weak. Why? Because the strong man cannot bear to see the manifestation of weakness, which to him is repulsive and abhorrent, just as dirt is abhorrent to a clean person. When thus reminded of his inferiority, the weak man awakens to a realization of his weakness and resolves to overcome it. This decision is often preceded by years of struggle and of painful experiences. Remember that a man cannot be tyrannized unless he himself permits it. If you have suffered a great deal in life, is it not due to a certain lack of independence and self-respect? Whoever told you that you are a weak, powerless and insignificant little clerk? You have nurtured this thought yourself, and it is accordingly no wonder that you

are now the victim of your self-hypnosis. You must stop cowering at the feet of your so-called superiors, who will go on trampling on you until you stand up to them. Who is holding you back from being what you want to be? Change the course of your thoughts from weakness to strength, from cowardice to courage, from fear to fearlessness. Respect yourself and show a little force and spirit. This alone will suffice to attract the attention of those around you. After all, they can see only what you show them. Be bold, and don't fritter away your days brooding over your negative nature and over all the things you have failed to achieve in the past. The trend of the times is to action, forceful action. Only the man who acts rightly can keep pace with the accelerated evolution of our day. Let your greatest action be the collecting of your own forces, so that you yourself become the embodiment of strength, courage and fearlessness. You will soon see that success is then inevitable. Decision is the greatest of all actions. When you have made your decision, do not swerve an inch from it. A will that is focused on a goal lights the way to the immediate realization of whatever attribute you desire. If your outlook is always positive and cheerful, every door will open to you and you will be raised on to a higher plane of living. But doors will always slam in the face of the self-destroying soul who is perpetually gloomy, fault-finding, pessimistic and negative. It may take time to attain to positive qualities, but the imposing structure of human dignity must be built. Just as a warm coat wards off the paralysing cold of winter, so you must equip yourself against the influences of your environment. A cheerful and calm disposition and a collected mind are the armour we must wear in this world.

It is unfortunately true that society sanctions a great many things today and regards many unhealthy things as normal and reasonable. Under these unhappy conditions man proceeds on his way. The strong and healthy survive, the weak succumb. But where weakness is so widespread, who are to be the leaders of men? Physicians must take upon themselves the serious responsibility of warning the people against the inexorable dangers of nicotine and alcohol. The risk of a national and international collapse is inevitable if people so far forget themselves as to yield without resistance to weakening and degenerating habits merely in order to calm their nerves. Even self-

respecting men and women can be heard today confessing that they cannot give up smoking. It is, they say, simply beyond their powers, and is in any case one of the few pleasures they have in life. These people are willing to admit that they have no self-control. How is it possible that they have come to be as weak and wayward as infants?

The highly-strung nerves of modern man can never be relaxed by nicotine. This slow poison destroys the faculties of clear thought and action. I have never in my life met a really healthy smoker. Can the suffocating smoke of burning cigars and cigarettes possibly have beneficial results? It brings nothing but slow destruction to nerves and brain.

Regarding smoking in your office, I would suggest that you talk the matter over with your colleagues. Explain in a positive way that you can get much more work done if you breathe clean air, that you can be much more productive if given a chance to be so. Talk with them in a friendly tone, and I am sure they will listen to you. Appeal politely but clearly to their common sense, and things will surely change. If the opposition still continues, approach your principal and ask for his help. The trouble is that few today have the courage to make a hard and fast ruling. If weakness is permitted, we ourselves are also to blame because we are prepared to put up with it. If one man energetically denounces weakness and sets a good example himself, the others will be glad to follow his lead.

INDIAN TALES

The Frog in the Well

A frog once lived in a well. He had lived there a long time, for he had been born and bred there. But he was still a very small frog. One day another frog, that had lived in the sea, fell into the well. The frog in the well asked the newcomer: 'Where do you come from?' The sea-frog answered: 'I come from the sea.' The frog in the well then asked: 'The sea! How big is the sea?' The sea-frog replied: 'It's very big!' The frog in the well stretched out his legs and asked: 'Is your sea this big?' The sea-frog said: 'Bigger, much bigger.' The frog in the well jumped from one side of the well to the other and asked: 'Is it as big as this?'—'My friend,' replied the sea-frog, 'how can you compare the big sea with your little well?' But the frog in the well was not at all convinced. 'Nothing,' he said, 'but nothing, can be bigger than my well. This fellow is a liar. He must be turned out at once.'

Narrow-minded people are no better than the frog. Sitting in their own small well, they cannot conceive that the world outside is any bigger.

The Greedy Beggar

A beggar once lay in his hammock, day-dreaming of how he might become rich. Above him hung a pot of rice he had collected by begging. Each day he cooked his frugal meal and stored up the rest of the rice in this pot.

'If a famine breaks out,' he thought to himself, 'I shall sell the rice for three gold pieces, and with the money I shall buy two she-goats. I shall sell their milk and their kids, and with the proceeds I shall buy cows. When I have sold the cows' calves, I shall buy buffaloes and oxen. These will bring me in a great deal of money. I shall buy land and herds and horses and live in plenty. Then I shall be offered a beautiful woman as wife, with a large dowry. She will bear me a son, he will play on my knee and I shall sing him sweet songs. If he goes near the horses, they might kick him, so I shall ask my wife to

keep him in safety. And if she doesn't obey me, I shall beat her.' The beggar's day-dream here became so vivid that he swung his fist wildly—and struck the pot of rice, which broke, pouring its contents over his dream-duped head.

The Vain Teacher

A brahman teacher went to the king and began to explain to him the contents of the Bhagavad Gita. The wise king realized the man's vanity and said: 'First study it yourself. When you know it all, I shall come to you, O pandit.'—'Why?' cried the brahman. 'I know every letter of the holy book.' Nevertheless, he went home and studied once more. Returning to the king, he said: 'I have learnt every word by heart. I shall now teach you, O Maharaja!' But the king gave him the same answer as before. Angered by this, the teacher went home again and sat down to his studies once more. On the next day he already appeared before the king again and repeated his request. The king, however, smiled and said: 'O brahman, as soon as you know the Gita I shall come to you.' Depressed and annoyed, the teacher returned home and asked himself: 'What can the king mean? What can there be in the Gita that I do not know?' He locked his door and began to study every line, every thought and every word of the holy book. Days passed, months passed, years passed. One day the king wondered: 'What can have happened to the pandit? Where can he be?' And so he set off in search of the vain little man. After he had sought through the whole town, he at last came to a small, neglected house, and there in a room he found a motionless, seated figure that glowed with light, peace and love. His vanity had left him, for he had seen the light, had become the light. Falling at the feet of the wondrous, silent form, the king said: 'I can see that light has dawned on you. If you will still condescend to teach me, behold me—one of your servants.'

The Most Indispensable of All

Once upon a time a fierce quarrel broke out between the five senses and *prana*, the vital force. Each of the contenders claimed to be the most indispensable to the human body. The eyes

claimed to be indispensable because they alone had the faculty of sight, the ears because they alone could hear, the tongue and palate because they alone held judgement over foods, and so forth. When all their arguments brought them to no conclusion, they agreed that each one should prove how indispensable it was by ceasing to perform its functions. The lot first fell to *prana*. But scarcely had it begun to leave the body when a cry of bewilderment and despair went up from the five senses, as each felt the life-force leaving it. They were therefore compelled to agree that *prana* was the greatest and most indispensable of them all.

The Thief and the King's Daughter

A thief stole into a king's palace at dead of night and overheard the king say to the queen: 'I shall give our daughter's hand to one of the *sadhus* who live on the bank of the river.' The thief thought to himself: 'Now, that's a stroke of luck. Tomorrow I shall disguise myself as a *sadhu* and sit among the holy men on the river bank. Perhaps I can succeed in winning the king's daughter.' The next day he did as he had planned. When the king's officers appeared and asked the *sadhus* to marry the king's daughter, none of them was prepared to do this. Finally the officers approached the thief disguised as a *sadhu* and made him the same proposal. The thief, however, gave no reply. The officers then returned to the palace and told the king that one young *sadhu* might be persuaded to wed the princess, but that none of the others would consent. The very same day the king himself sought out the young *sadhu* and earnestly entreated him to honour him by accepting his daughter's hand in marriage. But the thief's heart had been changed by the king's visit. He thought to himself: 'Behold, as soon as I wear the garb of a *sadhu* the king himself comes to me and is all entreaty! Who can say whether the future might not hold even better things for me if I were really a *sadhu*?' This reasoning influenced him so strongly that, instead of marrying on false pretences, he mended his ways from that very day and endeavoured henceforward to become a real *sadhu*. He never married and ultimately became one of the most devout ascetics of his day. Thus even the mere imitation of good may sometimes have unexpectedly beneficial results.

The Mouse and Her Wooers

The wise Yajnavalkya was one day performing the holy rites as he bathed in the Ganges when a small female mouse, dropping from the beak of a hawk, fell into the water before him. The mouse would certainly have drowned if the wise man had not saved her. After completing his purification ritual, the wise man used his magic powers to change the mouse into a little girl, whom he took home to his childless wife, saying: 'Let her be your daughter, my dear. Let her blossom into womanhood under your love and care.'

Overjoyed with her daughter, the happy mother allowed the child to have all that she wanted, pampered her and spoiled her. When the girl was old enough to think of marriage, her mother addressed Yajnavalkya thus: 'Let it not be said that nobody ever wished for our daughter's hand. Seek out, O husband, the most honourable of suitors for her.'

'So be it,' said the wise man and called upon Surya, the lord of light, to appear before him. To Surya he offered his daughter in wedlock, but the young woman refused, saying: 'Father, I cannot accept him as a husband, for he is much too hot. Call upon somebody who is mightier than he.' In despair, the wise man asked: 'Tell me, O lord of light, is there any one mightier than you?' 'There is,' replied Surya, 'the cloud is mightier than I, for when it covers me, I am lost from sight.'

When the cloud appeared, however, the girl averted her face, refusing him because he was too wet and cold, and his countenance too dark.

'Who is there,' asked the wise man, 'who is greater than you, and whose power exceeds yours?' 'The wind,' said the cloud, 'is much greater than I, for he forms me and tears me apart and is the greatest power in the heavens.'

When the wind appeared, the maiden said: 'No, father, not him either; for he is restless and will never stay at home. Choose one mightier than he.'

When the mountain appeared, the girl said: 'No, father, I cannot love him. He is too rough and clumsy and ugly. Choose, I beg you, one who is his superior.'

'Who is superior to you, O mountain?' asked the wise man.

And the mountain answered: 'Mice are superior to me, for they tunnel their way through me.'

So the wise man called upon a mouse and offered him his daughter's hand. In delight the girl recognized her own kind and begged: 'Oh father, turn me back into a mouse and let me marry him.'

Through the powers of the wise man the girl once more became a mouse, and the two were joined in holy wedlock.

Thus, though the greatest of suitors had asked for her hand, she refused them all—sun, cloud, wind and mountain—and chose to marry a mouse and to be one herself.



MOTHER

Somewhere on the love-blue lake of time,
Where silvery ripples caress the shores of my heart,
There, in the virgin night,
The hushed voices of a million lotus greet you, O Mother.
Glittering through the mist of forgotten worlds,
In your golden pomp of fairyland,
You rule the night of my life and give me light, O Mother.

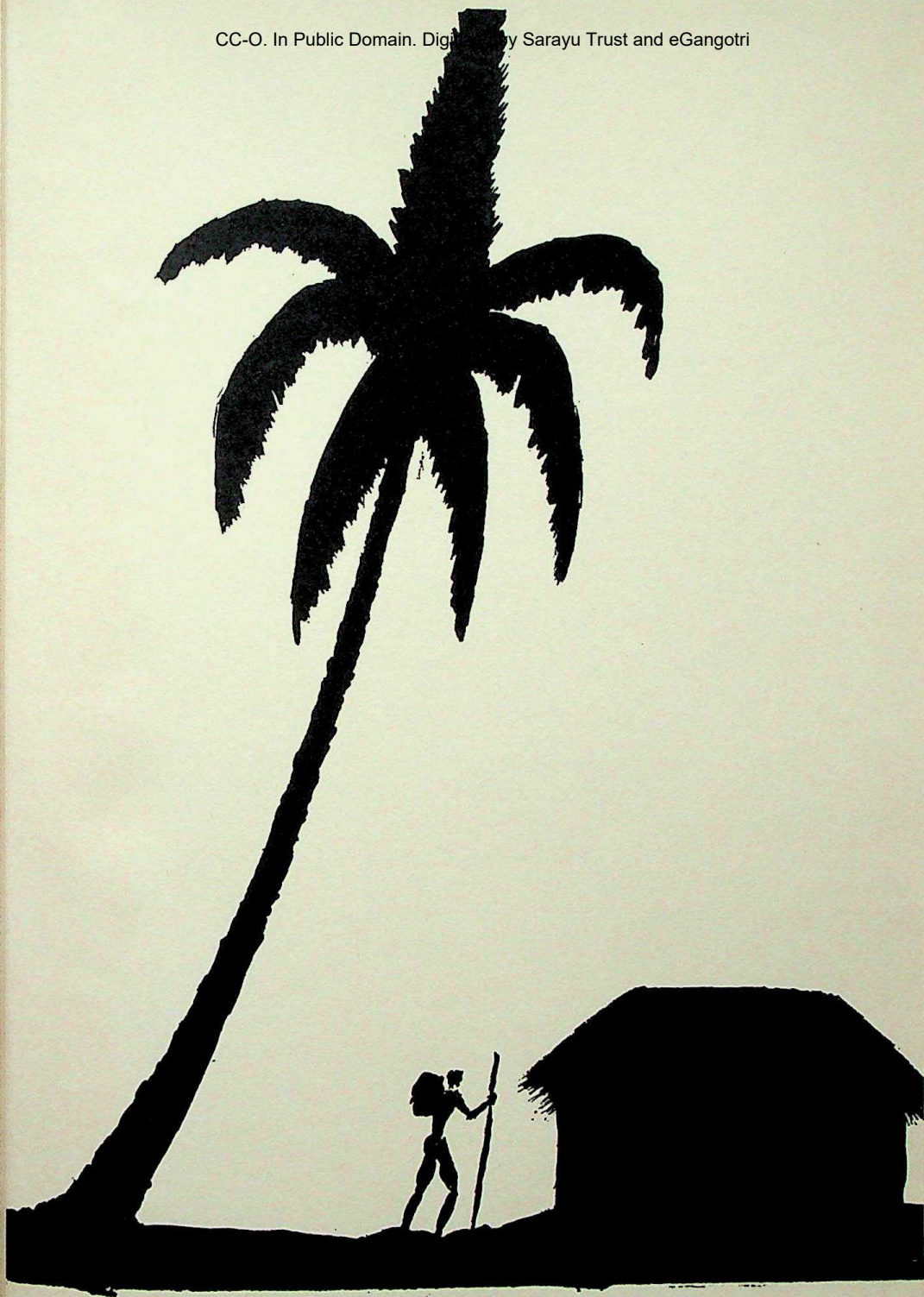
A HANDFUL OF LYRICS

As water changes into cloud and then comes down
As rain, thus have I passed through a myriad births,
Knowing not what I was, knowing not what I shall be.
Arrayed in all attires I come and go, knowing no birth,
Knowing no death.

In the market place of this world
I wander, knowing not where to go.
My wares I have brought from afar,
From a land arrayed with the purple blush of dawn.
Opening my bundle I place it before the passers-by.
They look on, knowing not what to choose,
Knowing not what to ask for.

On this strange star I pace my days.
Forgetting the footprints behind me,
I know not the path I have to tread.
Which of the many is my celestial home
That I have left behind, high in the sparkling
Vault of heaven?

The babbling brooks and singing streams
Race down into the river, only to end in their
Endless ocean home. So I race on to Thee,
Through the hill and dale of Thy creation,
Until, breaking through all barriers,
I join Thee, the endless,
I join Thee, the eternal,
I join Thee, the everlasting.





When I sing Thy name, O Lord, my heart
Loses its bounds, and I find myself
Rowing on waters which wash no shores.

Weaving with my hands the fate I face,
Carrying the bundle of duties,
I wander as a stranger in a foreign land.
Equipped with desire and armoured with hope, I come.
And often, sitting at the closing gates of life,
I cast a long glance behind.

The journey before me is long.
I have covered countless tracks
And have wandered many a world.
Drunk with the beauty of Thy creation,
I have slept on many a star.

With the eternal breath of heaven within my bosom,
My life knoweth no beginning, knoweth no end.



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